

THE
WORKS

Of the Reverend and Learned

Mr. Joseph Boyse, of Dublin.

BEING A
COMPLETE COLLECTION

OF ALL THE

DISCOURSES, SERMONS, and other TRACTS,

Which have been already Published.

To which are added,

Several other SERMONS; a Treatise of JUSTIFICATION; and,
a Paraphrase on those Passages in the New Testament, which
chiefly relate to that Doctrine.

Never before Published.

IN TWO VOLUMES.



L O N D O N:

Printed for JOHN GRAY, at the Cross Keys in the Poultry. M.DCC.XXVIII.

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A

Prefatory E P I S T L E

To the WORKS of

Mr. JOSEPH BOYSE.

THOUGH the Age appears much more inclin'd to relish Discourses of Wit and Pleasantry, Banter or Satyr, than Theological Treatises, written with Gravity and Seriousness; yet when God is pleas'd to furnish any of his Servants with valuable Abilities, that fit them for clearing and enforcing the great Truths and Duties of Religion, or for managing Debates about Matters of Weight and Importance with Advantage; to deny the World the Benefit of them, would be Ingratitude to him for so great a Favour, and an Unkindness both to the present and the rising Generation.

WE have long thought our worthy Brother a very valuable and useful Writer, and such as no Denomination among us would have had any Occasion to have been ashamed of. We have greatly rejoiced in his continued extensive Usefulness, both from the Pulpit and the Press; and are in his Case the better pleas'd with the Produce of the Latter, not only because of the Distance from us in which the divine Providence has cast his Lot, but because we are sensible that it is but for a very short Season, that Persons can any where expect to rejoice in his Light in this lower World. The Losses which we have, in this Respect, sustain'd, within the Compass of a very few Years past, mind us of this in a very sensible and affecting Manner. Of all Persons, certainly it most highly becomes those in our Station, *to work the Works of him that sent us into his Vineyard, while it is Day, because the Night cometh wherein no Work can be done.* And blessed is that Servant, whom his Lord, when he cometh, shall find so doing.

WE could not but much approve of the Proposal of collecting the Works of this Author in a single Volume; by which (tho' it be large) they will be the better preserv'd from being lost; and it will be the more evident to such as will be at the Pains to peruse the many Tracts it contains, that they all, with a steady Harmony, carry on one uniform Design of spreading Truth, Holiness, and Brotherly Love in a degenerate World; which is as noble a Design as any one can set himself to pursue.

THO' we are very sensible he is as far from needing, as from being capable of receiving Benefit by any Recommendation we could give either of him or his Performances, yet the Undertaking being great and expensive, we thought it not amiss by way of Encouragement to that, to give it as our Judgment, that though the Subjects here treated of are different, yet they are all judiciously handled, according to their different Natures: And, that at the same Time, great Candour, and a Catholick Spirit runs through the several Discourses, which in our Apprehension not a little recommends them.

THE *Sermons* are neither mean nor starch'd, but appear to us to be well calculated, at once to inform the Judgments, and work upon the Affections of such as read them with Care: And upon that Account, we cannot but look upon them as the more Valuable.

THE *Vindication of the True Deity of our Blessed Saviour*, has met with so favourable a Reception, that we are under no Fear of its losing its Credit, unless the Doctrinal Scheme of Christianity, as it is deliver'd in the Sacred Scriptures, should be quite chang'd and alter'd; of which we hope there is no Danger.

HIS *Account of Antient Episcopacy*, Reflections on Dr. Manby, and on the *Discourse concerning the Inventions of Men in the Worship of God*, and its *Vindication*; together with his Answer to Mr. Drury, and his Remarks on Dr. Tisdall, &c. shew him to have had extensive Views, and to have taken a considerable Compass in his Thoughts, and that to very good Purpose; to have fix'd in Nonconformity (of which some form and spread so despicable a Notion) out of real Principle, and upon close and mature Consideration, tho' without any Narrowness or Bitterness of Spirit; and to be very consistent with himself in his Notions and Practice, as well as charitable to those of different Sentiments.

AND as to his Discourses upon the important Doctrine of *Justification*, which are now first published, we conceive they may be of good Use in the *Antinomian* Controversy, which has been so visibly detrimental to Practical Godliness among us, that we should be most heartily sorry that any should have an Inclination to revive it.

THE Scholar and the Gentleman, the *Christian* and the *Divine*, are so conspicuous in all these Composures, that as we make it our ardent Request to Almighty God, to raise up a Number of such useful Instruments in his Church, so we cannot but hope, that conversing with such Writings, may help to make a Number of Persons much the wiser, and the better.

AND to find that this proves the Case, as it cannot but be a very considerable Comfort to our worthy Brother, (to whom we, with a most sincere Affection, wish a *Sana Senectus*, and an *Eὐδαιμονία*) so will it be no small Pleasure to us also,

Who are by Inclination, as well as by Office, and in Duty, Desirers of the Common Salvation.

APRIL xxiii. M.DCC.XXVIII.

E. Calamy.

John Evans.

John Newman.

W. Harris.

Benj. Grosvenor.

Tho. Leavesly.

THE
P R E F A C E
OF THE
A U T H O R.

SOME Friends, to whose Judgments I pay a due Deference, finding that the Impression of some Sermons and other Treatises I had formerly published was entirely gone off, desir'd my Consent to have them re-printed, and collected into one Volume. I have, in Compliance with their Advice, agreed to their Proposal, and added several Sermons on other Subjects, and some Dissertations on the Scriptural Doctrine of Justification.

FOR what is Controversial among Protestants in any of these Treatises, I have seen no sufficient Reason to alter my Sentiments upon the Review of them. I am conscious to my self, that I have impartially endeavour'd to find out the Truth, and to plead for it with Candour, and a charitable Frame of Mind towards those that differ from me, in Matters about which wise and good Men may disagree, thro' the Imperfection of our present Light. I can heartily esteem and love those, that in such controverted Matters have a different Way of Thinking from mine; and bless God, that the great Essentials of Christianity wherein we are agreed, are of far greater Necessity and Importance than those wherein we differ. And since the best of Men know but in Part, such Differences do but give us the Occasion of practising that excellent Precept of the Christian Religion, that requires us to forbear one another in Love.

I must refer the Reader to the Prefaces, or Introductions, for the Occasions of the several Treatises in this Volume being published.

FOR the Sermons, the most of them being preach'd on the uncontested Truths or Duties of the Christian Religion, I hope they may be serviceable to promote the Interest of real Piety and Holiness; the visible Declension whereof, all good Men observe, and greatly lament. I rejoice that there are so many excellent Discourses on such important Subjects already extant. I heartily wish they were more generally spread, and oftner read in Christian Families, in order to the diffusing vital Christianity, and preserving the rising Age from that Contagion of Infidelity, Irreligion, and Immorality; the spreading of which carries so threatening an Aspect. Our blessed Saviour has too just Occasion to propose the same Question to the professed Christians of this Age, that he did to the Twelve, when many of his other Disciples went back, and walked no more with him, Will ye also go away? And we are highly concern'd to make him the same Answer that Peter did, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of eternal Life, John vi. 66, 67, 68.

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SERMON I.

PREACH'D at Dublin on the 23d of October, 1705. being the Anniversary Day of Thanksgiving for the Deliverance of this City from the Irish Rebellion, 1641.

John xviii. 36. *Jesus answer'd, My Kingdom is not of this World; if my Kingdom were of this World, then would my Servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my Kingdom not from hence.* Page 2.

SERMON II.

Preach'd at Dublin on the 23d of October, 1703. being the Anniversary Day of Thanksgiving for the Deliverance of this City from the Irish Rebellion, 1641.

Matt. xxiii. 29—36. *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, because ye build the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnish the Sepulchres of the Righteous.*

30. *And say, If we had been in the Days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets.*

31. *Wherefore ye be Witnesses unto your selves, that ye are the Children of them which killed the Prophets.*

32. *Fill ye up then the Measure of your Fathers.*

33. *Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell.*

34. *Wherefore behold, I send unto you Prophets, and wise Men, and Scribes; and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them shall ye scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City.*

35. *That upon you may come all the Righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias, Son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar.*

36. *Verily I say unto you, all these Things shall come upon this Generation.* pag. 10.

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17. *If any Man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the Temple of God is Holy, which Temple ye are.* pag. 19.

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22. *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great Possessions.* pag. 23.

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Luke xxiii. 39—43. *And one of the Malefactors which were hanged, rail'd on him, saying; If thou be Christ, save thy self and us.*

40. *But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same Condemnation?*

41. *And we indeed justly, for we receive the due Reward of our Deeds; but this Man hath done nothing amiss.*

42. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.*

43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to Day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.* pag. 29.

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uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all Things to enjoy.

18. *That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*

19. *Laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal Life.* pag. 35.

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1 John v. 10. *He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness in himself; he that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar, because he believeth not the Record that God gave of his Son.* pag. 41.

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Heb. i. 14. *Are they not all ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation?* p. 50.

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Jer. ii. 19. *Thine own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy Backslidings shall reprove thee: Know therefore and see, that it is an evil Thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my Fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts.* pag. 56.

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Luke xv. 11.—24. *And he said, A certain Man had two Sons:*

12. *And the younger of them said to his Father; Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me, and he divideth unto them his Living.*

13. *And not many Days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his Journey into a far Country, and there wasted his Substance with riotous Living.*

14. *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land; and he began to be in want.*

15. *And he went and joined himself to a Citizen of that Country, and he sent him into his Fields to feed Swine.*

16. *And he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat, and no Man gave unto him.*

17. *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired Servants of my Father's have Bread enough and to spare, and I perish with Hunger.*

18. *I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee,*

19. *And am no more worthy to be called thy Son, make me as one of thy hired Servants.*

20. *And he arose and came to his Father; but when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell on his Neck, and kissed him.* 21. *And*

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21. And the Son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.

22. But the Father said to his Servants, Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him; and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his Feet.

23. And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it; and let us eat and be merry.

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16. *There dwelt Men of Tyre also therein, which brought Fish, and all manner of Ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the Children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.*

17. *Then I contended with the Nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil Thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath-day.*

18. *Did not your Fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this Evil upon us, and upon this City? yet ye bring more Wrath upon Israel, by profaning the Sabbath.*

19. *And it came to pass, that when the Gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the Gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath: And some of my Servants set I at the Gates, that there should no Burthen be brought in on the Sabbath-day.*

20. *So the Merchants and Sellers of all kind of Ware, lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.*

21. *Then I testified against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the Wall? If ye do so again I will lay Hands on you. From that time forth came they no more on the Sabbath.*

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S E R.

SERMONS

Preached on

Various Subjects.

The PREFACE.

THE following Sermons that were most of them preach'd on Particular Occasions, are now in compliance with the Request of many that heard them, collected into one Volume. They are but as so many Fragments that are here gather'd up, that nothing may be lost, (to allude to John vi. 12.) How they may suit with the Palate of curious Readers, I am not very anxious to know, having design'd them for the Use of such as have a true Relish for the plain and unadulterated Truth of the Word of God. The most of them are of a Practical Strain and Tendency, wholly calculated for promoting the uncontested Interest of true Piety and Holiness. What little occurs that is controversial in them (which is chiefly in the two First Sermons, and in the Last, and the Appendix to it) I have endeavour'd to manage with that Clearness and Temper that are the genuine Characters of the Wisdom that is from above, which is, first pure, and then peaceable. For the Papal Supremacy (of which the first Sermon treats) I take it to be the most pernicious Engine, both of dividing the Christian Church, and of supporting those gross Corruptions in it that are the most indelible Reproach to the Christian Name. So that till that usurped Power of the Roman Bishops be renounc'd, any effectual Reformation of the Popish Churches, and consequently any such Concord and Coalition with them (as some of late plead for) appears to me an hopeless and impossible thing. And how little Prospect there is of the Popish Clergy's renouncing their sanguinary Principles and Practices, I have fully shewn in the 2d Sermon on Mat. xxiii. from ver. 29, to ver. 36. And for the Principles on which some late degenerate Protestants so uncharitably, as well as groundlessly, confine the Catholick Church to what they call the Episcopal Communion; They are so manifestly prejudicial to the Interest of the Reformed Religion, and to the Concord of those Churches that profess it, that I cannot think it unbecoming the Character of a Peace-Maker to expose the Weakness of them. He that would promote the nearest Union of the Reformed Churches, must endeavour to remove these unscriptural Pretensions, as one of the great Obstacles that lie in the way of it. For my own part, Plain uncorrupted Christianity is my Religion. I have a mental Communion with all Churches whatever, so far as they profess that. But I desire to fix my stated external Communion with such as own it in its greatest Simplicity and Purity, and who add thereto the most comprehensive and Catholick Charity. The Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink, but Righteousness and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God, and approved of Men, Rom. xiv. 17, 18.

J. B.

S E R M O N I.

Preach'd at *Dublin* on the 23d of *October*, 1705.

BEING THE

Anniversary Day of *THANKSGIVING* for the Deliverance of this City from the *Irish Rebellion*, 1641.

John xviii. Ver. 36.

Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World; if my Kingdom were of this World, then would my Servants fight, that I should not be deliver'd to the Jews: But now is my Kingdom not from hence.

WE are wont to congratulate our manifold Deliverances from Papal Tyranny (both those of an elder, and those of a later Date) as the greatest National Blessings that the good Providence of God has bestow'd upon us. And we deprecate our Returning under that grievous Yoke, as the most insupportable publick Calamity that can befall us. But if all this while, the Roman Bishop be indeed (as he pretends) the Vicar of Christ, the Head of the Catholick Church, and the necessary Centre of Unity to it; so that none are capable of Salvation but such as live in Subjection to him, and Communion with him; then indeed, what we are wont to celebrate as glorious Deliverances, are no better than publick Judgments; and that Subjection to the Roman Yoke, which we esteem as so formidable an Evil, wou'd be the most desirable Blessing: And tho' Methods of Violence are very cross to the grain of human Nature, yet we might be almost tempted to forgive our Enemies for using some Rigour and Severity, when it was only to reduce us into the Bosom of the Catholick Church, and to compel us to come into the Fold of Christ.

I shall therefore at present examine these specious Pretensions of the Roman Popes, who so confidently assume to themselves a Supremacy over the whole Christian Church, as delegated to them from Jesus Christ the undoubted Head and King of it; and who make the Acknowledgment of this their Universal Sovereignty a necessary Article of the Christian Faith, without which no Man can be saved. For if their Empire be indeed the Kingdom of Christ, which he administers by them as his Vicars and Delegates, then 'tis a damnable Sin to withdraw our Necks from under their Sacred Yoke. But if they have no such Supremacy delegated to them from our blessed Saviour, if their Kingdom and Empire have none of the Essential Characters that belong to his, but rather the quite opposite ones, that carry the most open Contrariety to it; then we may justly regard their pretended Supremacy as a most unjust and wicked Usurpation, and ought to esteem our Freedom from their usurped Domination as an eminent National Blessing, which we are bound to adore the Divine Goodness for preserving to us hitherto, and to beg of him the Continuance of.

Now to put this Debate to a short Issue, I shall not examine all the Arguments which those of the Romish Church produce to prove, That our blessed Saviour delegated this Universal Supremacy over his Church to St. Peter; Nor shall I take pains to refute those Shadows rather than Reasons, which they alledge to perswade

us, That St. Peter made over this Supremacy to all the Bishops of Rome, who should succeed him in that his pretended See or Chair. (This I have at large formerly done). But I shall fix on this one Character that our Saviour gives in my Text of his Kingdom; and shall from thence demonstrate to you, that the Papal Empire can never be the Kingdom of Christ, since it apparently bears a Character diametrically opposite to this. And this is a Dispute that is to be determin'd, not by nice and intricate Speculations, but by plain matter of Fact, obvious to the View of all that will impartially consider it.

The Occasion of the Words was this.

Jesus being brought by the Jews before Pilate the Roman Governor, under the Character of a Malefactor, Pilate puts this Question to him, *Art thou the King of the Jews?*

No doubt he had heard of the Pretensions of Jesus of Nazareth to be the Christ or promised Messiah, whom the Jewish Nation had so long expected, under this Character of the King of Israel, who was to sit on the Throne of David: Who should reign over the House of Jacob for ever, and of whose Kingdom there should be no end. See John i. 49. Luke i. 32, 33. And that occasions his putting this Question to him, as supposing that such Pretensions might be dangerous to Cesar's Authority, and therefore just ground of his proceeding against him. Our Lord instead of directly answering the Question proposes another to him, *Say'st thou this of thy self, or did others tell it thee of me?* q. d. Dost thou put this Question to me from any thing thou hast found in my Conduct tending to disturb the publick Peace, or to subvert Cesar's Authority, which thou are solicitous to maintain? Or dost thou make this Enquiry only at the Suggestion of others, who charge me with assuming this Title? Upon this Pilate replies, *Am I a Jew?* Thy own Nation, and the Chief Priests have deliver'd thee unto me, What hast thou done? q. d. 'Tis not I but thy own Nation, and the Rulers thereof that are thy Accusers. And what hast thou done to occasion this Charge they bring against thee, of assuming the Title of their King.

To this our Lord answers in the Words of my Text, *My Kingdom is not of this World*, &c. q. d. 'Tis true indeed, that Title of King of Israel does belong to me; and I came to set up that Kingdom of David which the Prophets have so long foretold. But 'tis not a temporal and earthly, but a spiritual and heavenly Kingdom, I came to erect. A Kingdom that does not interfere with, nor can prejudice the Interests of earthly Princes. A Kingdom that is not to be propagated by Force

Force of Arms, and advanc'd by the *Violence of bloody Wars*. Had I pretended to such a *Kingdom*, I would have endeavour'd to gather about me *armed Followers*, that might have drawn their *Swords* in my *Defence*, and prevented my being deliver'd up into the hands of my known malicious *Enemies*. So that thou may'st plainly see, *That my Kingdom is not from hence*. 'Tis neither in its *Rise*, in its *Constitution* or *Administration*, in its *manner of Propagation*, or in its *Tendency* and *Design* like the *Kingdoms of this World*, that occasion such warm and fierce Contest among those that are *Pretenders* to them. 'Tis a *Kingdom* that *earthly Princes* have no just Ground to *envy*, and which 'tis no way their *Interest* to oppose.

You see then the *Character* that our blessed Saviour gives of his *Kingdom*, viz. *That 'tis not of this World*.

In speaking thereto, I shall suggest several *Particulars* that will at once both *illustrate* and *prove*, That this is a just *Character* of *Christ's Kingdom*, *That 'tis not of this World*.

I. This *Kingdom of Christ* is not of this *World*, in respect of its *Rise* and *Original*.

Earthly Princes claim their *Crowns* as either descended to them by an *hereditary Right*, or bestow'd by the *free Consent* of willing *Nations*, or as *acquir'd* by *Conquest*, &c. But our blessed Saviour claims his *Kingdom* as the *immediate Gift* of the *Father*, by whom all *Power* in *Heaven* and *Earth* is committed to him; and he is constituted *Head* of his *Church*, and *Head* over all things to it. *Earthly Magistracy* is with respect to its *immediate Original*, an *human Ordinance*; and only *mediately* from *God*, the *Fountain* of all *Power*. But the *Son of God* owes his *universal Empire* to the *immediate Donation* of the *Father*, who has set him as *King* on his *holy Hill* of *Sion*, and given him the *Heathen* for his *Inheritance*, and the *utmost Parts* of the *Earth* for his *Possession*. See *Mat. xxviii. 18. Eph. i. 22, &c. Psal. ii. 6, 8.*

II. Again, the *Kingdom of Christ* is not of this *World*, in respect of its *Constitution*.

The *Laws* of it are *spiritual* and *heavenly*, such as not only regulate *Men's external Behaviour*, but their *inward Thoughts* and *Purposes*, *Desires* and *Intentions*, *Inclinations* and *Affections*. They are chiefly calculated for promoting the *Glory of God*, by moulding our *Wills* to a *Conformity* to his, for the *ennobling* and *perfecting* our *reasonable Nature*, for laying the *Foundation* of our *inward Peace* and our *everlasting Happiness*.

The *Rewards* of this *Kingdom* are also *Spiritual* and *Heavenly*.

Our blessed Saviour no where proposes to his faithful Followers *earthly Honours* and *Dignities*, as the *Recompence* of their *Fidelity* and *Service*. He does indeed set before them a noble *Object* of their *Ambition*; but 'tis the *Glories of the invisible World*, that are yet to be *revealed*. He promises them *Crowns* and *Thrones*; but 'tis an *unfading Crown of Righteousness* and *Life*; 'tis an *heavenly Throne*, to which they are not to be *advanced* till their *Warfare* on *Earth* is ended. But as for this *World*, he rather gives them the *Prospect* of the *Cross* as the *Way* to the *Crown*; and of *Sufferings* as the *ordinary Road* to *Glory*. Nor does he any where invite *Men* into his *Kingdom* by the *Promise* of *temporal Riches*. He himself was so far from amassing vast *Treasures* on *Earth*, that he tells us, *The Foxes had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had Nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his Head*, *Mat. viii. 20.* He sent his *Apostles* without *Gold*, or *Silver*, or *Brass* in their *Purses*, and tho' he tells them, *That the Labourer was worthy of his Hire*, yet he no where encourages them to expect great *earthly Revenues* and *Estates*, as the *Fruit* of their painful *Labours*. He does indeed promise to them valuable *Treasures*, but they are *incorruptible ones*; and a *rich Inheritance*, but 'tis an *Inheritance in Revelation*, not to be enjoy'd on this *Earth*, but *lay'd up* for them in the *highest Heavens*.

And for the *Qualities* and *Characters* that recommend *Men* as his *acceptable Subjects* to the *Rewards* of his *Kingdom*, they are very different from those that

are usually found in such as are *Attendants* and *Ministers* in *earthly Courts*.

'Tis an *ambitious* and *aspiring Genius* that usually paves *Men's Way* to *Preferments* in the *Kingdoms of this World*. But nothing is a more insuperable *Obstacle* and *Bar* to the *Glory* of his *Kingdom*, than such an *eager Desire* of *secular Greatness* and *Dominion*. As we may see in that severe *Rebuke* that our blessed Saviour gave his *Disciples* when they so warmly disputed, *who should be greatest among them*: To dash all such *ambitious Pretensions* out of *Countenance*, he sets a *little Child* before them as an *Emblem* of *Humility*, and tells them, *That those who most resembled such a little Babe in Lowliness of Mind, and Alienation from all worldly Pride, should be greatest in his Kingdom*. See *Mat. xviii. 1, 2, &c. Mark ix. 33. Luke ix. 46, &c.*

The *Ministers* in *earthly Courts* must be vers'd in all the *Methods* of *refined Policy*, in all the *subtle Arts* of *Disimulation* and *Flattery*; and 'tis such *secular Prudence*, or rather *Craft*, that ordinarily recommends them to *publick Employments* and *Stations*. But in the *Kingdom of Christ*, 'tis *Simplicity* and *godly Sincerity*, in opposition to this *fleshy Wisdom*, that must enable us to approve our selves to his *Eye*.

Those that attend *earthly Courts*, usually do it with a *Design* to *enrich themselves*, to *make a Fortune*, and *raise their Families*; and therefore make their *Inclinations* and *Conduct* on all *Occasions* to bend and truckle to their *worldly Interest*. But to render a *Man* an *acceptable Subject* of the *Kingdom of Christ*, 'tis requisite that he should be *crucify'd* to the *World*, and the *World* to him. The *Glory* and *Service* of his blessed Master must be his *highest Interest*, which no *worldly Interest* must stand in *Competition* with. *Mammon* must be no *Competitor* with *God*, *Mat. vi. 24.* *Earthly Riches* are neither to be eagerly coveted (since by exposing us to manifold *Temptations*, they render our *Salvation* the more difficult) nor, when obtain'd, are they to be *hoarded up*, but *laid out* in our Master's *Service*.

Again,

III. The *Kingdom of Christ* is not of this *World*, as to the *manner* of its *Administration*.

As will appear if we consider the following *Particulars*.

We see nothing in it of the *visible Pomp* and *Splendor* of *earthly Kingdoms*.

The *incarnate Son of God*, when he was on this *Earth*, appear'd in the *Form* of a *Servant*, and not of an *earthly Sovereign*. He had no *Palace* to *inhabit*; no *capital City* for the *Seat* of his *Empire*; no *Guards* for his *Defence*; no *Court*, no *Retinue*, no *Equipage*, none of the usual *resplendent Marks* of *human Grandure* and *Authority*. And that *unconceivable Glory* with which he is now invested in the *highest Heavens*, is to us *invisible*. Accordingly our Lord tells those *Pharisees* that enquir'd when the *Kingdom of God* would come, that it comes not with *Observation*, or *outward shew*, that they might say, *lo here*, or *lo there*; for, saith he, *the Kingdom of God is within you*, *Luke xvii. 20, 21.*

Again; This *Kingdom* is not manag'd by that *coercive Power* that *Secular Princes* make use of.

Those *Apostles* to whom he committed the *highest Authority* in his *Church*, were to govern it by the *Word*, and not by the *Sword*. The *Authority* he delegated to them was to be exercis'd, not on the *Bodies*, but on the *Souls* of *Men*. And even with respect to the *Consciences* of *Men*; they were not constituted *Lords* over *God's Heritage*, nor were to usurp a *Dominion* over their *Faith*, having only a *Commission* to deliver to his *Church* the *Doctrine* *Christ* had *revealed*, and the *Commands* that he had *given*: They had no *Power* either to impose any *new Articles*, or any *new Laws* of their own on the *Faith* or *Practice* of the *universal Church*. They were to deliver to them what they had received of the Lord, *1 Cor. xi. 23.* So that their *Office* was rather a *Ministry* than properly a *Government*. And in the *Exercise* thereof, we often read indeed of their

their exhorting, their persuading, their beseeching and intreating those whom they address'd themselves to; But no where of their magisterial Commands, and of their enjoining this or that of their own meer Will and Pleasure, with severe Anathema's against all that should dispute their sovereign Mandates. Such an imperious Dictatorship as this our Lord expressly forbid them to use. For when the two Disciples requested that they might sit, the one at his right Hand, and the other at his left, in his Kingdom, he checks their ambitious Pretensions; Ye know (saith he, Mat. xx. 25, 26, 27.) that the Princes of the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are great exercise Authority over them: But it shall not be so among you. But whoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister: And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant. 'Tis not Tyranny in the exercise of civil Government that our Lord there forbids, (for he speaks of such Princes as were Benefactors, and all heathen Rulers were not Tyrants, see Luke xxii. 25, &c.) but all coercive Power of the Sword, nay all arbitrary Dictatorship in the Management of their Spiritual Authority; their Office being (as I suggested) rather a Service and Ministry, than a Sovereignty and Domination.

Again, The Kingdom of Christ does not intermeddle with Men's worldly Affairs and Interests; and he never design'd to erect a Tribunal for the Decision of secular Causes. So much we may justly infer from our Lord's rejecting the Request of him that desir'd him to speak to his Brother to divide his Inheritance with him, with such Marks of his just Dislike of it; Man, who (saith he) made me a Ruler and Judge over you, Luke xii. 14.

Again, This Kingdom of Christ is not to be propagated and enlarged, as the Kingdoms of this World, by Force of Arms.

The Apostles who were sent to advance it in the World, tell us, that the Weapons of their Warfare were not carnal, but spiritual, design'd to batter down no other Strong-holds but those of Sin. They were sent to captivate Men to the Obedience of Faith, with the Armour of Light, by Arguments and Persuasions, and Entreaties proper to convince their Understandings, and gain their Hearts. They were to draw Men to our blessed Saviour with the Cords of a Man, and with the Bands of Love. They were to use no other Compulsion to bring Men into his Kingdom, than serious Importunity in their Solicitations. Violence and Rigour, cruel Torments and barbarous Usage, were none of the Methods that he recommended or allowed for the Conversion of Infidels themselves. Nay, our blessed Lord esteems none as his Subjects that are not his willing People, Psal. cx. 3. He abominates that external Profession of his Religion, that is extorted by Terrors from the Tongues of Men, contrary to the inward Persuasion of their Minds and Bent of their Hearts.

Once more, His Kingdom is not to be administered according to the common (but generally corrupt) Maxims of human Policy.

There is no use of Dissimulation and Fraud, of Subtily and Craft in the Management of the spiritual Affairs of it. Besides, worldly Interest is not here the governing Principle; and therefore there is no Occasion of varying our Conduct in pursuing the Concerns of this Kingdom, according to the different Aspects of secular Advantage and Gain.

And to add no more;

IV. The great Design of this Kingdom is not so much to promote the temporal Prosperity of Kingdoms and States (though a strict Observation of its Laws would have an admirable Tendency this Way) as to advance the Glory of God in the Salvation of Souls. Its great End is to set up God's Empire and Throne in the Hearts of Men, and to prepare them by a due Proficiency in divine Wisdom and Knowledge, in Grace and Holiness here, for the Perfection and Blessedness of the heavenly Kingdom. And all its Affairs are to be managed with a steady Regard to this great Design, which secular Princes rarely have in their View; nor

is their coercive Power so directly adapted to promote it.

And thus I have given you such a short view of the Kingdom of Christ as sufficiently demonstrates, That 'tis not of this World, being vastly different from the Kingdoms thereof in respect of its divine Original, its heavenly Constitution, its spiritual Manner of Administration, and its glorious Design and Aim.

I now proceed to examine the confident Pretensions of the Bishops of Rome to be the Vicars of Christ, to whom he has entrusted the Administration of this Kingdom of his.

To that Purpose they tell us, "That as our blessed Saviour, before he left this Earth, delegated his supreme Authority to St. Peter the Prince of the Apostles, so St. Peter, by fixing his See at Rome and dying there, bequeath'd this Supremacy to his Successors in that Chair to the End of the World. And therefore the Roman Bishop is the Head of the Catholick Church, that his Empire is the same with that of Christ, whose Lieutenant and Delegate he is; and that Subjection to him is not only due from all the Christian World, but so necessary, that there is no Salvation to be had without it. He being the Centre of Unity to the Christian Church, all are excluded out of the Pale of it, that are not in Communion with him."

This Doctrine (as strange and monstrous as it may seem to us) is no disputable Opinion in the Church of Rome; but one of the essential Articles of their Trent-Creed, without the belief whereof they tell us, That no Man can be saved. And accordingly in their publick Profession of Faith, are these remarkable Words, "I acknowledge the holy catholick and apostolick Roman Church to be the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, and I promise and swear true Obedience to the Roman Pope, Successor of blessed Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, and the Vicar of Jesus Christ."

I shall not at present take notice, how entire a Stranger the Apostle Peter himself was to any such Supremacy over the rest of the Apostles, and over the universal Church, as Christ is by them supposed to have delegated to him; nor shall I observe how little the Bishops of Rome for several successive Ages ever dream'd of any such vast Legacy left them by St. Peter, or ever laid Claim to such an universal Empire over the whole Christian Church, though there are a thousand invincible Arguments to be offer'd against these vain and chimerical Pretensions. (See Dr. Barrow's Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy.)

I shall only confine my self to this one obvious and clear Character in my Text.

If the Popes Empire be the Kingdom of Christ, then 'tis not a Kingdom of this World. If therefore it appears on the contrary to be a temporal Kingdom, in its Original, its Constitution, its manner of Administration, and in its Design every Way conformable to the Kingdoms of this World, but most dissonant from the Nature and Genius of this spiritual Kingdom of Christ, then 'tis manifest that 'tis none of his: and that this Monarchy over the Church, which the Roman Bishops arrogate to themselves, is a most vile and daring Usurpation of the Throne of Christ, and may more justly be denominated, the Empire of Antichrist, than the Kingdom of Christ.

Now to make good this Charge against the Papal Kingdom, let us first take a general View of it, and then more distinctly consider its Original, its Constitution, its Administration and Design.

First, Let us take a general View of this Papal Kingdom or Empire.

For our Saviour's Kingdom, himself tells us, it comes not with any observable Pomp or Shew, for 'tis a Kingdom set up in the Consciences and Souls of Men, Luke xvii. 20.

But if we look on this Papal Empire, we find in it, on the contrary, all the observable Magnificence and Pomp of earthly Kingdoms.

This

This pretended Monarch of the Christian World has an earthly City for the capital Seat of his Empire; even that celebrated one of Rome, which St. John describ'd in his Time, as that great City that reigned over the Kings of the Earth, Rev. xvii. ult. and which he describes under the Character of Babylon the great, the Mother of Harlots and Abominations of the Earth, ver. 5. And as Rome's being the Imperial City while that famous Empire stood, first gave the Bishops of that City the most considerable Rank and Station in the Christian World; so their Successors have fairly improv'd the Advantage upon the Removal of the Seat of the Empire to the East, to fix here the Seat of a new Empire, which (as their Historians are wont themselves to boast) has reviv'd the antient Majesty and Glory of the Roman Empire under another Name and Form, but not unlike to that it had before.

In this capital City this sovereign Pontiff and Monarch has his Residence; from hence he issues his Mandates and Decrees. Here he dwells in a stately Palace that yields to very few on Earth in the Magnificence of the Building without, or Costliness of the Moveables and Furniture within. Here he keeps a splendid Court and Retinue, no way inferior to that of secular Princes. Nay, here he has a Senate, (bearing some Resemblance to that of antient Rome) I mean the College of Cardinals, who in their Creation are stiled, Senators of the Imperial City, equal to Kings, and the true Hinges on which the World is to turn. Here he has a large Territory round his capital City, which is as entirely subject to his Authority, as the Kingdoms of any secular Princes are to theirs, under the Notion of the Church's Demeans, or St. Peter's Patrimony. But this is but a small Part of his Dominions, for he claims all Christian Countries as so many Provinces of his vast Empire. Here he pretends to establish subordinate Governors, such as Primates, Metropolitans, Arch-bishops and Bishops, who as they are to derive their Authority from him, so they are accountable to him for their Administration. And to manifest his Supremacy over them, they are obliged at their Installation, to take an Oath of Fealty and Allegiance to St. Peter, to the holy Roman Church, and to our Lord the Pope, and to his Successors that shall be canonically elected. And the Papal Dignity and the Royalties of St. Peter they promise to defend against all Persons whatsoever, (not excepting their own Princes). And these Dignities the Roman Pontiff invests them in, (as Princes are wont to do) by some external Mark or Gift, as a Cross, a Ring, or a Pallium.

But temporal Princes themselves must not plead Exemption from this sovereign Authority of Christ's pretended Vicar. For the Roman Popes have for several successive Ages claim'd a sovereign Power over Princes themselves, to set them up or depose them at their Pleasure. And no wonder, when in their Account, those Princes do as truly derive their Authority from the Pope as the Moon borrows her Light from the Sun. When Emperors or Kings are but (as Pope Innocent the III. somewhat unmannerly terms them) the Dogs which the Pope, the universal Shepherd, employs to guard this or that Part of his Flock; And whom therefore (as the Jesuit Becan well observes) the supreme Pastor may drive away, and turn out of Office when they grow negligent and careless. Nor is this pretended Dominion over secular Princes a bare empty Title. For the Roman Popes in the Exercise of it have claimed real Marks of Homage and Subjection from them. We find in the Roman Pontifical this Form of an Oath that the King of the Romans was to take before he receiv'd the Imperial Crown from the Pope. "I King of the Romans, and under the good Pleasure of God about to be Emperor, do of my own free Will, swear to God, and St. Peter, that I will be henceforth Protector and Defender of the sovereign Pontiff, and of the holy Roman Church, in all her Occasions and Interests, guarding her Rights and Privileges as far as I can by God's Help, according to my best Skill and Power, with a pure and upright Fidelity, So help me God."

And whereas sovereign Princes on Earth have Lords under them that are their Vassals, holding Lands from them by way of Fealty and Homage; so have the Roman Pontiffs from Time to Time laid claim to most of the Kingdoms of Europe, as feudatory to the Church, pretending that they held them as Fiefs from St. Peter and his Successors. Such a Claim Gregory the 7th laid to Spain, Alexander the 3d to Portugal, Innocent the 3d to England, Boniface the 8th to Scotland, Gregory the 7th to Hungary, Benedict the 9th to Poland, Alexander the 2d to Denmark, &c. And it was in Virtue of these confident Claims that the Roman Pontiffs for so many Ages received such vast Tributes from the several Countries of Europe, as a substantial Acknowledgment of his Authority over them. (Of which more anon.)

And to all other Marks of temporal Empire, we may add those Tribunals which the Roman Bishops erected in all those Kingdoms where their Authority was own'd, call'd Spiritual Courts, but in which, under one frivolous Pretence or other, a vast Number of civil Causes was brought under their Cognizance; to the great Diminution of the civil Power; the Papal Canons are the Laws they are bound to observe; but all their Proceedings are subject to the superior Authority of the Court of Rome, to which all Appeals are to be made, and to which the most important and profitable Causes were still reserved.

And sure when we see such a Monarch as this, seated in his Imperial City, thence issuing his Laws under the Title of Decrees, Canons, Bulls, &c. extending his Power over so many Provinces, receiving from his Subjects, both Ecclesiastick and Secular Rulers, such Oaths of Fealty, and such considerable Tributes as an Acknowledgment of their Dependence and Subjection, When we see him making Alliances and Treaties with neighbouring Princes, and view his Court crouded with the Embassadors of Princes from the several Parts of Europe; we can see little, in such an Empire as this, of that Character our Saviour gives of his Kingdom, that 'tis not of this World. For there is all imaginable Conformity in this to the Kingdoms of this World: Here is all the Magnificence and Pomp that can belong to them.

But Secondly, To set this important Truth in a yet clearer Light, let us proceed to take a more particular View of this Papal Empire, in its Original, in its Constitution, in its manner of Administration, in its Design, and we shall, in all these Particulars, find all the Marks of an earthly instead of a Spiritual Kingdom.

I. Let us view this Papal Empire in its Original and Rise.

And I am sure this is far from being divine.

If our blessed Saviour delegated this vast Empire to St. Peter, we are sure, whatever Right he might have to it, he never got the Possession of it. And we are as sure, that the Roman Bishops for several Centuries never once put in their Claim for it. Had they put in any such Claim, there had been no Occasion for Leo the 9th in the 11th Century, and his Successors, to support their Pretensions with an imaginary Donation of Constantine the Great to Pope Sylvester, in which 'tis pretended that that Emperor, upon his removing his Seat to Byzantium, (afterwards call'd Constantinople) left Rome it self, and all the Western Part of the Empire to Pope Sylvester and his Successors. 'Tis true indeed, this pretended Donation is now run down by themselves as a counterfeit Piece, and particularly by their great Annalist Baronius; and 'tis not unpleasant to hear the Reason he gives for it. He owns indeed that the Pope has such a Sovereignty, not only over Italy, but over all the Western Empire, but it's false (saith he) that this was given him either by Constantine, or by any other; For it comes immediately from Christ, by whose Order the Emperor is obliged to receive his Crown from the Pope, to own himself his Vassal, to pay him Fealty and Homage, and to hold his Bridle and Stirrup: Happy Historian indeed, that has disco-

discover'd the Mistakes that so many former Popes had run into, who for want of understanding the Extent of their Power, claim'd that from the *Liberality* of Emperors and Princes, which belong'd to them by the *immediate Gift* of Christ himself. But that voluminous *Annalist* must put out our Eyes, before he can persuade us to disbelieve what *History* does so manifestly shew, *viz.* That the *Papal Power* and *Empire* has from time to time, ow'd the vast *Advances* and *Progress* it has made in the World, partly to the *liberal Concessions* of bigotted and *superstitious Princes*; partly to the *violent Incroachments* of the *Popes* themselves, on those *Princes* that were too weak to resist and oppose their ambitious *Designs*; and partly to those *numberless Artifices* and *Tricks* that they us'd to wheedle *Princes* out of their just *Rights*, and to raise their own *Authority* on the *Diminution* of theirs. And indeed, the *Contests* of the *Popes* for several *Ages* with *secular Princes*, who complain'd of their *Usurpations* and *Incroachments* on the *Civil Power*, but were usually born down with the *Torrent* of the *Papal*, make up a great Part of the *History of Christendom*, for several *Ages*. A plain *Demonstration*, that the *Rise* of this *Empire* was *human* and not *divine*; from *Earth*, and not from *Heaven*.

II. Let us go on to view the *Constitution* of this *Papal Empire*.

And here I might at large shew how entirely different the *Laws* of this *Papal Empire* are from the *Laws* of *Christ*; and in how *numberless Instances* repugnant to them. But to enlarge on that, would require a *Volume* rather than a *Sermon*.

I might also shew, How this pretended *Monarch* allures *Men* to subject themselves to his *Empire*, and to combine for the *Defence* and *Support* of it, not by *Motives* drawn from the *other World*, but by those *Preferments* and *Dignities*, which carry with 'em an *Affluence* of *secular Honour* and *Wealth*, and are a fit *Lure* only for *Men* of *worldly Minds*.

But what I shall chiefly insist on under this *Head*, is to shew, That the *Spirit* that visibly reigns in this *Papal Empire*, is most opposite to the *Qualities* and *Characters* of those that our *Blessed Saviour* will own as the acceptable *Subjects* of his *Kingdom*.

1. You have already heard, That 'tis *Humility* that will render a *Man* greatest in the *Kingdom of Christ*. Sure then we might expect to find something of it in his pretended *Vicars*, if the *Roman Bishops* were really such. But we may boldly challenge the *World*, to produce us such a *Set* of *Monsters of Pride*, as have for several *Ages* possess'd the *Papal Empire*. Methinks, when I read their *Decrees*, and their *Bulls*, there is, at first *View*, a strange *Difference* between the *Language* of *St. Peter*, and that of his *Successors*. To hear the one exhort and advise, intreat and beseech, with all the *Lowliness* that became a *Disciple* of his blessed *Master*; while the others talk in the most *imperious Strain* that the proudest *Monarchs* ever us'd, will easily convince us, that whatever *Power* *St. Peter* bequeath'd to them, he left them none of his amiable *Vertues* of *Humility* and *Modesty*.

'Tis true indeed, their *Mandates* are often prefac'd with that hypocritical *Title* of *Servant of the Servants of God*. But if the *Roman Pontiff* begin in the *Style* of a *Lamb*, he goes on with that of a *Dragon*. This pretended *Servant*, soon acts the Part of a sovereign *Dictator* and *Master*, absolutely requiring a *blind Obedience* to all his *Injunctions*, and denouncing rash *Anathemas* and *Curses* against all that dare oppose his *Pleasure* and *Will*.

But 'tis no *Wonder* that he shou'd speak to the rest of *Mankind* in such an *imperious Strain*, when he treats *sovereign Princes* themselves with so little *Respect*, and makes even those *earthly Gods* pay him all the *Marks* of *Vassalage* and *Subjection*. Methinks, when on the one hand I see *Peter* so modestly but earnestly refusing that *Excess* of *civil Respect*, paid him by *Cornelius*, when he fell down at his *Feet*, Acts x.

25, 26. And on the other, when I see the *Roman Bishops* obliging *Princes* themselves to *kiss their Toe*, nay, to *surrender their Crowns* to them; When I behold them riding in *Pomp*, while *Emperors* hold their *Stirrup*, and *Kings* walk on *Foot* before them; When I see them trampling on the *Necks* of *Emperors*, and dashing off their *Crowns* with their *Feet*, nay forcing them upon pretence of some *Offence* given, to wait barefoot at their *Gates* for *Absolution*, and to add no more, not only *Threatning* to tread *Princes* under their *Feet*, but actually *deposing* them at their *Pleasure*, and shedding *Torrents* of *Blood* to execute their *Sentence*, I cannot but discern in the one the genuine *Spirit* of the lowly *Jesus*, but in the other the detestable *Image* of *Lucifer* himself, and the lively *Character* of that *Man of Sin* that sitting in the *Temple of God*, exalts himself above all that is called *God*, or worshipped (i. e. as *Expositors* very justly interpret it, *Above all earthly Magistrates* to whom the *Title* of *Gods* is sometimes given in *Scripture*.) 2 *Thess.* ii.

But no wonder that those shou'd proudly trample *Princes* under their *Feet*, whose daring *Arrogance* runs so high as to assume not only the *Titles*, but the incommunicable *Rights* of the blessed *God*. It were needless to mention, How often the *Roman Bishops* have had the *Appellation* of *Gods* given them by their vile *Flatterers*, and that on the most solemn and publick *Occasions*. Nor can we reasonably excuse that *Title* of his *Holiness*, and of our most holy *Lord* the *Pope*, from *Blasphemy*, which yet is the common *Style* us'd at *Rome* by all that address themselves unto him. Nor can I view that scandalous *Action* of the *Pope's* being after his *Election* seated on the *Altar*, (the *Residence* and *Seat* of their pretended *God*, I mean the *Host*) and there receiving that *Homage* of the *Cardinals* which they call *Adoration*, without discerning herein the *Characters* of him that tempted our *Saviour* himself to fall down and worship him. But what then shall we think of that unsupportable *Instance* of *Pride*, I mean the *Power* which the *Roman Popes* claim to dispense with the *Laws* of *God*; as if their *Authority* were superior to his, and they had a *Right* to control his *Commands*. And yet 'tis notorious, that the *Roman Bishops* carry their *Pretensions* thus high, and do in various *Cases*, presume by their *Authority*, to licence and allow those *Crimes*, which the *Law* of *God* has most strictly forbid; even such as *Incest*, the *Breach* of solemn *Oaths* and *Vows*, &c. And if this be not a daring *Affront* to the *Authority* of *God*, 'tis hard to say what is. But thus they make good their *Pretensions*, "That all *Laws* human and divine are lodg'd in the *Pope's* *Breast*; That it belongs to him to judge all, but to be judg'd by none". And if any think that such *Language* and such *Actions* as these savour of that *Child-like Humility* which our *Lord* recommends, it will scarce be possible for them to tell us what *Arrogance* and *Pride* is.

2. Another *Character* and *Quality* of the *Subjects* of *Christ's Kingdom*, is *Sincerity* and *Simplicity*; but how entirely the *Spirit* of *worldly* and *corrupt Policy* reigns in the *Papal Empire*, I shall have occasion to suggest when I come to consider the *Administration* of the *Papal Kingdom*.

3. Another *Character* and *Quality* of the *Subjects* of *Christ's Kingdom*, is a *Temper* mortified to this *World*, and all the low *Interests* thereof; and if the *Roman Bishops* were indeed the *Vicars* of *Christ*, we might expect to find something of this heavenly *Disposition* in them.

But sure if ever the *Spirit* of the *World* took Possession of any, it has remarkably seiz'd on these pretended *Successors* of *St. Peter*. Sordid and insatiable *Avarice* has so notoriously reign'd in this *Papal Empire*, as if *Mammon* were the only *God* that were here ador'd. I have on former *Occasions* shewn, how entirely the *Papal Religion* as such is accommodated to serve a *worldly Interest*. For what end is the *Credit* of a *purgatory Fire* kept up, but to enhance the *Sale* of *Masses*, and *Indulgences*? Nay even the *Vows* of *voluntary Poverty* are but a specious *Pretence* and *Hook*,
to

to enrich the *Monasteries and Convents*? What is the great Use of *Images*, but to enrich the *Priests* by the numerous *Offerings* of a *blind and superstitious People*? But I shall at present confine my self to the *See and Court of Rome*, the Source of this horrible *Corruption*. Some that pretend to nice Computations, reckon, that in *Popish Countries*, the *Clergy*, who are scarce above the *hundredth Part* of them, do yet enjoy a *Third* of the *Lands*. But however that be, we are sure, that as the *Roman Bishops* pretend to so vast an Empire, so they have left no Stone unturn'd, no *scandalous Arts* untry'd, to heap up a suitable *Fund* to support it. Sometimes they would solicit the *Liberality* of *superstitious Princes*, and put them upon *expiating* their *Crimes* by their *Beneficence to the Holy See*: Sometimes they would on pretence of some *Affronts* offer'd to their Authority, *interdict* whole *Kingdoms*, and oblige them to *buy off* the *Censure*, by paying some *annual Tribute to St. Peter*. Sometimes on pretence of sending a *Bishop or Monk* to convert some *Pagan Country*, they claim'd it as a *Fief of the Holy See*, and demanded a considerable Sum under the Notion of *Peter-pence*. And indeed, as the *Roman Bishops* some Ages ago, had found one *Artifice* or other, to render most *Nations in Europe* tributary to them, so 'tis not imaginable what prodigious Sums were paid by them for the Support of the *Papal Grandure*. If we may judge of other *Kingdoms* by what *Historians* tell us of our own, the *Roman See* must be rich indeed, that so miserably drain'd and pill'd them all. For our own, they tell us, that the Sums sent yearly to *Rome* from hence, exceeded the *Revenue* allotted to our *Princes*. For, besides the *Peter-pence* pay'd by all, and the vast Sums squeez'd by the *Disposal and Sale of Benefices*, (of which more anon) that one *Tribute of Annates and First-fruits*, came in a few Years to 16000 *l.* a great Sum in those Days; and yet but a small Part of the *Pope's Revenue* here. What an immense *Treasure* then must the *Tribute* of all the other *Kingdoms of Europe* amount to?

But the *Avarice* of the *Roman Bishops*, was too insatiable a *Gulf* to be thus easily fill'd. And therefore they have found out that constant and never-failing Spring of *Wealth*, the *scandalous Sale* of all that is accounted *Sacred* among them. And to such a Degree of shameless *Traffick* was the *Court of Rome* come, as to set up a *Chancery*, in which all manner of *Crimes*, even the most odious and detestable, were set to sale at a certain Price. And a Man might at a very moderate Rate, purchase an *Absolution* for *Incest* or *Buggery*, for *Adultery* or *Murder*, for killing his *Parents*, or lying with his *Sisters*. Nay, tho' some of these *Abuses* are retrench'd, and that open *scandalous Sale of Indulgences* that occasion'd the *Reformation*, is in some Degree forborn; and tho' upon the *Reformation* several of those Springs are damm'd up, that once emptied their Streams of *Wealth* into the *Tyber*, yet the *Roman Bishops* want not means to enrich their *Coffers*, by turning the *Temple of God* into an *House of Merchandize*. For besides what the *Pope* holds in *Italy*, under the Notion of *St. Peter's Patrimony*, besides all the considerable *Lands* he has in *Cologne, Liege, Mentz, Trier*, and several *Bishopricks* in *Germany*, how vast a yearly *Revenue* does accrue to him, from the *Investiture of Bishops*, from the *Sale of Benefices*, from *Re-unions*, *Commendams*, *Reservations*, *Expectatives*, *Provisions*, *Resignations*, *Rescriptions*, *Translations*, *Erections*, *Subrogations*, and *Dispensations* of innumerable Sorts; and above all, the *Sale of Indulgences*, which are still in Credit at *Rome*, and may be obtain'd there by any, that will porrigere manus adjutrices, (i. e. Give Money for them.) And 'tis almost incredible what *Treasures* these *scandalous Affairs* bring into the *Datary Office* at *Rome*. And the *Pope*, as pretended *Head of the Church*, has so interested himself in all that Variety of Causes, call'd *Ecclesiastical* in all *Popish Countries*, and so entirely reserv'd the *Decision* of all those that bring any *Profit* to his own *Court*, that this draws to it a

vast Attendance of *Embassadors* from all *Popish Princes*, to solicit their *Masters Business*; and we may be sure that they must not come empty handed there, if they wou'd plead their Cause with Success. For how rude a Rebuke soever *St. Peter* gave to *Simon Magus* for offering him Money, his Successors are grown much wiser, and wou'd have treated so fair a *Chapman* with greater *Civility* and *Tenderness*.

I know indeed, this shameful *Traffick*, these scandalous Arts of *Money-catching*, have for many Ages occasion'd the loud Complaints of all *Europe*. Many of the *Popes* themselves have own'd their own *Court* to be the Spring of this abominable *Corruption*, and talk'd loud of *Reforming* it. But alas! when they have made the Attempt, they found the *Disease* to be too rooted and strong for all *Remedies*, and have quickly given it over as *desperate and incurable*. Nay, when these Complaints were renew'd at the *Council of Trent*, and several specious *Decrees of Reformation* were made there, yet they were thro' the subtle Management of the *See of Rome*, eluded by the *Councils* referring the *Reformation of these Abuses* to that very *Court*, whose Interest was chiefly concerned in the Support of them.

And are these *Monsters of Avarice* the *Vicars* of that blessed *Saviour*, who had no where on *Earth* to lay his *Head*? Are they the *Successors* of *St. Peter*, who told the lame *Cripple*, *Silver and Gold have I none*? But as *Pope Innocent the 4th* pleasantly told *Thomas Aquinas*, when he found him in a Room where his Officers were counting a large Sum before him, *The Language of the Church is much alter'd since that time*. And sure the *Bishop of Rome* cannot pretend that his *Kingdom* is not of this *World*, when the *Wealth* of all neighbouring *Nations* so plentifully flows into it. But,

IV. Let us a little farther view the Administration of the *Papal Empire*.

And here every thing shews it to be a *Kingdom of this World*.

I have already observ'd, that there are all the Marks of *external Pomp and Glory* that are to be seen in other earthly *Kingdoms*.

I have also suggested, how far the *Papal Power* has endeavour'd to engross to it self the Cognizance of a vast Multitude of *Civil Causes*. Such as those that relate to *testamentary and matrimonial Affairs*, to *Oaths*, &c. Tho' our blessed *Saviour* was so shy of dividing an *Inheritance*, his *Vicars* set up themselves for *Rulers and Judges*, even to dispose of *Scepters and Crowns*; and have often thrown all *Europe* into *Confusions and Wars*, by their busy intermeddling with those important Affairs of *secular Princes*, without being ever desir'd to interpose their *Arbitration*.

But I would here take notice, how entirely the Affairs of the *Papal Empire* are manag'd by carnal and worldly *Policy*.

And this indeed, the Admirers and Flatterers of the *Court of Rome* are so far from being asham'd of, that they rather glory in it. And *Cardinal Pallavicini* takes much Pains not only to vindicate this, but to recommend that *Court* as the *School* of the most refined *Policy* in the *World*. And it will not be unuseful to take some notice of the subtle *Artifices* that it uses to support the *Grandure* of what they call the *holy See*.

'Tis one obvious *Artifice* to cover this truly temporal *Empire*, under pretence of a *spiritual Domination*. Thus the *Pope's Territories* are call'd the *Demeans of the Church*, and *St. Peter's Patrimony*. To pay *Homage and Tribute* to the *Pope*, or to kiss his *Slipper*, is to throw our selves at the Feet of the *Apostles*: To go on *Pilgrimage* to *Rome* for gaining *Indulgences*, is [visitare limina Apostolorum] to pay the *Apostles* a Visit at their own *Home*: For a Man to become the *Pope's Vassal*, is, in their Language, to hold of the *holy See*, and become tributary to *St. Peter*. And indeed, how shou'd the *Popes* have ever been able with a few

Pages of barbarous *Latin* to shake the Thrones of Princes, and embroil all *Europe* in Wars, if they had not frighted a blind and superstitious People, by setting the venerable Names of *St. Peter* and *St. Paul* at the Head of their *Bulls*, and threatening all Opposers with their terrible *Indignation*! And who durst in those ignorant Ages dispute the *Popes Laws*, when they past under the sacred Name of *Apostolical Canons and Ordinances*, or the *Decrees of the Apostolick See*? Who durst question the *Validity* of his *Sentence*, who was suppos'd to sit in *St. Peter's Chair*, and to have the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven* at his *Girdle*? And doubtless the temporal *Grandure* of the *Roman Popes*, greatly contributed in those ignorant Ages, to conciliate the greater Reverence to that *Spiritual Authority* they pretended to.

Another great fetch of the *Papal Policy*, has been to keep the ruling Part of the Clergy, in all the *Western Nations*, in the strictest Dependence on what they call the *holy See*. To this End they kept the Power of *Investiture* of *Primates, Metropolitans, Archbishops, and Bishops*, in their own Hands, and us'd an hundred Artifices to free them from the *Civil Power*, and procure them great *Immunities*, under the Notion of the *Liberties and Rights of the Church*; and when *Princes* endeavour'd to vindicate their *Civil Power* against these unreasonable *Encroachments*, the *Popes*, by appearing in Defence of them, have ty'd the superior Clergy firmly to their Interests, because these their *Immunities* seem to stand or fall with the *Papal Authority*. But because even the *Popish Prelates* have many of them taken up a dangerous Opinion, "That their Authority is as much of divine Right as the *Pope's*". (A Doctrine no way relish'd at *Rome*, where 'tis pretended, that all *Bishops* derive their Authority from the *holy See*). Therefore to balance their Authority (shou'd they set it up in any Opposition to his) the *Roman Popes* have set up a vast Number of *religious Orders*, whom they exempt from *Episcopal Jurisdiction*, and thereby oblige to become so many stout *Janizaries*, for the Defence of that *Papal Power*, on which the Preservation of their great *Privileges* depends. And 'tis well known, how strange an Influence and Power these *Monks and Friars* have over the Consciences of the *Laitie*, especially by that grand Artifice of *auricular Confession*. So that all Attempts against the *Pope's* exorbitant Power, must be dangerous in a *Popish Country*, where he has so numerous *Partizans* that are the chief *Directors* of the Consciences of an ignorant People.

'Tis another deep fetch of *Papal Policy*, to link their own Authority as much as possible to the Interests of *secular Princes*, that they may be thereby the more strongly oblig'd to support it. As for Instance in *Portugal*, the best Part of that *King's Revenue* arises from the Sale of *Indulgences*, in which the *Prince* goes share with the *Pope*.

Another Artifice they have us'd, is to accommodate Religion to the various Humours of Mankind.

For those that affect the Severities of Religion, there is a great appearance and shew of *Austerity*, of *Mortification* and *Devotion* in their *Religious Orders*. Their numerous pretended *Fasts*, their coarse *Habits*, their *Hair-cloths*, and their *Whips*; their laborious *Works of Penance*, and strict *Rules of Discipline*, carry a great Air of *Piety* to those that look no farther than the *Monks Cows*, and never saw the inside of their *Convents*.

On the other hand, to those that are for an easier and pleasanter Way to Heaven, there are Devices to secure their Salvation without any such Severities. A kind Confessor will grant them *Absolution* from eternal Punishment upon very easy Terms. And for the Pains of *Purgatory*, there are so many privileg'd *Altars*, so many *Images*, &c. where *Indulgences* may be had at a cheap Rate: There are so many *Religious Orders*, that will upon a valuable Consideration, make a Man *Partaker* of all their *Merits*, and allow him the Benefit

of their good Works; and especially *Masses* are so effectual a Relief, that they are in no great Danger of those *Flames*, unless they are very Poor. But for them, I do not find that the *Roman Bishops* have any great Consideration, they are left to shift as well as they can for themselves.

'Tis another great Artifice of *Papal Policy*, to make their publick Devotions a grateful Entertainment to the Senses of Mankind.

To this Purpose, we see their *Altars* adorn'd with the most glorious *Paintings*, or the most stately *Images*, enrich'd with *Gold* or *Pearls*, and whatever can charm the Spectators Eyes: We see their *Priests* officiating in pompous and costly *Habits*, their *Churches* resound with the choicest *Instrumental* and *Vocal Musick*; and their publick *Processions* carry an Air of *Pomp* and *Magnificence* every way proper to please the Senses, and amuse the Minds of a superstitious People.

But the most detestable fetch of *Papal Policy*, is to keep the People muffled up in *Blindness* and *Ignorance*.

And 'tis for this End, the Holy Scriptures are so carefully lock'd up in an unknown Tongue; (for they are sensible, where the Oracles of God come into their Hands, the grand infallible Oracle at *Rome* soon loses its Credit and Authority.) Nay, they dare not trust their publick Devotions themselves in the vulgar Language, for fear lest the Perusal of them might raise Scruples and Objections against them; it being every way for the Interest of the Court of *Rome*, to cherish in the People an implicit Faith and blind Obedience.

I shall only take notice of one Instance more of their carnal Policy, and that is in the Management of what they call (tho' most absurdly and falsely) their *General Councils*. And I shall confine my Observations to that last celebrated Council of *Trent*. All *Europe* at that time made loud Complaint of the Corruptions of the Court of *Rome*: The *Emperor* and other *Popish Princes*, made earnest Solicitations for the calling a free Council to reform them. The *See of Rome* at last, tho' with great Reluctancy, yields to their importunate Demands. But the *Pope* to secure his Authority from any dangerous Attempts, opens the Council when few were come to it, but such *Italian Bishops* as were entirely devoted to his Interest; and then he settled all the Preliminaries, and particularly that important one, That nothing shou'd be debated there, but what his Legates shou'd first propose. This was during the several Sessions of that Council complain'd against by most Bishops of other Nations, as a manifest Encroachment on the Liberty of the Council. But all their Complaints were from time to time eluded, and this Clause was never given up, till the Council was just coming to a Conclusion, so that there was no farther Use of it. By Virtue of this one Clause, Matters were so manag'd, that there was no Decree past in the Council, but what had been debated and agreed on before at *Rome*. That faithful Historian, that has recorded the Transactions of that Council, informs us, how many numerous Pensionaries the Court of *Rome* maintain'd there; how often they brib'd some of the *German, the Spanish, or French Bishops* to betray the Councils and Designs their Brethren were forming in their private Cabals, for retrenching the *Pope's* exorbitant Power. And 'tis pleasant to observe, that when either the *Embassadors of Princes*, or the *Prelates* made any Attempts to strike at the *Papal Authority*, they were successfully eluded by the *Partizans* of the Court of *Rome*, who set them presently by the Ears together. Some insisting on correcting the Abuses of the *Episcopal Power*, which pleas'd the *Embassadors*, but did not relish with the *Prelates*. Others urging the Retrenching of the Regal Power in Ecclesiastical Affairs, which the *Bishops* approv'd, but the *Embassadors* were ready in their Master's Name to protest against. And thus the Court of *Rome* by dividing her Enemies, broke the Neck of all their Designs, and kept her exorbitant Power safe and untouch'd.

And

And to compleat all, the *Bishop of Rome* by prevailing with the Council to send their Decrees to him, for Confirmation got his Superiority in effect decided. And to secure it, the Pope immediately after the Council publishes a Bull, in which he reserves the Interpretation of the Council's Decrees to himself. So that all their pretended Decrees for Reformation signify no more than the Pope pleases.

In a word, All Europe has been long sensible that the most refined Policy reigns in the Court of Rome, and runs thro' all their Administrations. And they are so proud of it there, as occasion'd one of the Popes to pass that scornful Complement upon one of the French Ministers at his Court that set up for a great Politician, *That he reason'd well for a Beast that came from the other side of the Alps.* But let the World be Judge, Whether all the dissembling Arts, whether all the various Windings and Turnings of Serpentine Craft, be the Characters of that Kingdom of Christ that is not of this World? But,

Let us a little observe the manner of propagating this Papal Empire.

And this has been done not by the Method of Light and Conviction, but of that of coercive Force, nay of Savage Cruelty. 'Tis true indeed the Pope's Hands are not immediately dip'd in Blood: But that is because he has prevail'd with bigotted Princes to become his Lictors, and the Executioners of his Decrees. 'Tis they blindly lend him their Arm and their Sword to destroy the Opposers of his Sovereign Authority. But as the Devil is said to cast those into Prison, whom his Instruments at his Instigation did persecute, Rev. ii. 10. So are the Bishops of Rome chargeable with all the Violence and Cruelty which is exercis'd in pursuance of their Sentence, or at their earnest Solicitation.

And sure if we do but view the Bishops of Rome one while raising Croisados, not to recover the Holy Land from Infidels, but to destroy some hundred thousands of Christians, (whose chief Crime by their own Confession, was their blaspheming the Roman Court and Clergy.) When we behold them erecting every where those Inquisition-Tribunals that rendred themselves the Abomination and Horror of all Europe by their arbitrary and cruel Proceedings against many thousands of pretended Hereticks. When we see them Soliciting all Princes in their Communion to the making and executing of Sanguinary Laws against all that attempted a Reformation; When we see them kindling a thousand Flames all over Europe for the Burning those they were pleas'd to brand for Hereticks; When we hear them Applauding and Abetting the most perfidious and inhuman Massacres, such as that of Paris, and this of Ireland; When even such a Pope as Innocent the XIth, (so fam'd for his Morals above most of his Predecessors) shall cry up this French King's perfidious Violation of the Edict of Nantz, and the savage Method of Draggoning that prepar'd the way for it, as the Immortal Glory of his Reign; When we hear the present Pope in his Bull against the Camisars approving the Cruelty of his Predecessors, and proposing their laudable Example for his Imitation; What do we see in the Conduct of these pretended Vicars of Christ that looks like the Spirit of that merciful Jesus that came not to destroy Men's Lives but to save them? What can we discern of his Character in them, who came to lay down his own Life for his Sheep, not to condemn Millions of them to Slaughter and Butchery? And if our blessed Lord so rebuk'd his Disciples, when they call'd for Fire from Heaven to consume real Hereticks, what wou'd he say to those that have kindled such Flames on Earth to destroy only pretended ones?

I should in the IVth and last Place, Consider the Design of the Papal Empire.

And this is so manifestly opposite to the great Design of the Kingdom of Christ, as may further demonstrate the Falseness of the Papal Pretensions.

To treat this Head at large wou'd lead me into a

vast Field. I shall therefore only suggest a few Heads to your Meditation.

It was one great Design of Christ's Kingdom to overturn the Pagan Idolatry, and particularly both their Polytheism, and their Worship of Demons as a middle sort of Beings between them and the Supreme Gods that were Mediators between us and them. And to this purpose, the Gospel proposes to us, *One God and one Mediator between God and Men, the Man Christ Jesus.*

But any one may easily see, how evidently the Pagan Demon-worship is reviv'd in those Devotions that the Church of Rome pays to Angels and Saints.

The Kingdom of Christ is a Kingdom of Light, erected for the Diffusion of divine Knowledge through the World.

The Papal is a Kingdom of Darkness, in which the Means of divine Knowledge are lock'd up, and the Oracles of God silenc'd.

Christ came to restore the Worship of God to that Spirituality and Simplicity that is most suitable to his Nature.

The Roman Bishops have debas'd it by such an incredible Number of unscriptural, vain, ludicrous, superstitious Rites, as exceed either the Jewish or Pagan Rituals, and are good for nothing but to overload and stifle all true Devotion, and to turn it into empty Pageantry and Shew.

Christ came to recover Men to inward and real Holiness, to a Conformity to the Law of God.

But how many Artifices the Roman Bishops have made use of to enervate the Force of God's holy Laws, to evacuate the Necessity of sincere Obedience, to give Men the Prospect of Absolution and Pardon upon easier Terms, would require a Volume rather than a short Discourse to unfold.

And now upon the whole. If any Man can reconcile these Characters of the Papal Empire, its Secular Magnificence and Pomp, its Earthly Original and Rise, its unsupportable Pride and insatiable Avarice, its notorious Encroachments on the Civil Power, its carnal and often hellish Policy, and its detestable Blood-thirstiness and Cruelty; I say, If any Man can reconcile all this with the Character here given of the Kingdom of Christ, viz. That 'tis not a Kingdom of this World, he need never despair of establishing a Communion between Light and Darkness, and an Alliance between Christ and Belial.

Having thus dispatch'd what I undertook to shew, That the Papal Empire is by no means the Kingdom of Christ, I should now make some Reflexions thereon. I shall content my self with naming a few.

I. If the Papal Empire be not the Kingdom of Christ, it looks at least very like that of Antichrist.

I shall not enter on the Consideration of those several Passages that are suppos'd to speak of Antichrist's Kingdom. As 2 Thess. ii. 13. Rev. xvi, xvii, &c. I shall only apply the Observation that some made concerning our Saviour himself to this his pretended Vicar. When the People debated whether he were the Christ, they very well reason'd, *When Christ cometh, Will he do more Miracles than those which this Man hath done?* John vii. 31. So may we reason, *When the great Antichrist comes, Will he do more mischievous things, than the Roman Bishops have done?* Will he abuse the Name and Authority of Christ to cloak more abominable Pride and Avarice, and carnal Policy, and inhuman Cruelty, and woful Corruption of the Christian Religion to the subverting the great Designs of it, and the destroying of Millions of its sincere Professors, than the Roman Popes have done? What can be said of the most oppressive Empires that the Scriptures represent under the Character of Beasts, (as Lions, Leopards, Bears, &c.) that any way equals the notorious Guilt of this Papal Empire? May we not say of them in allusion to what was said of Saul and David, *That where these Pagan Empires have slain their Thousands, the Papal has slain its ten, nay its hundred Thousands.*

II. We may hence be excited to adore the Goodness of God for our eminent Deliverances from that

Papal Tyranny that is so opposite to the Spirit and Kingdom of Christ.

We are thereby freed from the scandalous *Taxes* and *Tributes* that once drain'd our Wealth into that Sink of the *Roman Coffers*. The *Crowns* of our *Princes* stand fast on their Heads, without any Danger of being shaken by the *Thunders* of the *Vatican*, which now make no *Noise*, because they are sensible they can do no *Execution*. But above all, our *Consciences* are freed from that unsupportable *Tyranny* that had so long enslav'd so great a part of the *Christian World*. We enjoy *Christianity* in its *Simplicity* and *Purity*; and are under the *easy Yoke* of *Christ*, not under that intolerable one of *Papal Canons* and *Injunctions*. Those *Flames* are now happily *extinguish'd* which *Papal Zeal* had kindled. And our *Churches* are not made such a deplorable Scene of *Ruin* and *Desolation* as those of *France* and other *Kingdoms*. And all these invaluable *Mercies* have been preserv'd by a Series of wonderful *Providences*, that have recover'd us from the brink of *Ruin*.

III. Let us pray for the overturning this *Papal Empire*.

It stands in so direct *Opposition* to the *Kingdom of Christ*, that the one must be advanc'd upon the Ruins

of the other. And we should second our Prayers with our hearty Endeavours in our Station to prevent the Return of *Papal Tyranny*, and particularly by adhering to the *Protestant Succession* as now establish'd by Law, in opposition to the *Claim* of any *Papish Pretender*.

IV. Let us more chearfully subject our selves to the *Kingdom of Christ*, as a just Return for the divine Goodness in shaking the *Papal Yoke* from off our Necks.

Let us pay all chearful and dutiful Subjection to the glorify'd Son of God as our heavenly King and Lord. Let us embrace his sacred Truths, and yield a sincere Obedience to his holy and gracious Laws. Let us aspire to the glorious, invisible, eternal Rewards of his Kingdom. Let us cherish that deep Humility, that godly Sincerity and Simplicity, and that Mortification to this World, that are necessary Characters of his acceptable Subjects. And let us promote the Interest of his Kingdom by Methods suitable to the Nature of it, even those of Light and Persuasion, of Meekness and Gentleness, of Kindness and Love. And let us account what Service we can do for advancing the great Designs of it, as the most valuable End for which we can live.

S E R M O N II.

Preach'd at *Dublin* on the 23d of *October*, 1703.

BEING THE

Anniversary Day of *THANKSGIVING* for the Deliverance of this City from the *Irish Rebellion*, 1641.

Matth. xxiii. Ver. 29——36.

29. Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, Because ye build the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnish the Sepulchres of the Righteous.
30. And say, If we had been in the days of our Fathers, we would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets.
31. Wherefore ye be Witnesses unto your selves, that ye are the Children of them that killed the Prophets.
32. Fill ye up then the Measure of your Fathers.
33. Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, How can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?
34. Wherefore behold I send unto you Prophets and Wise Men and Scribes, and some of them ye shall kill and crucify, and some of them ye shall scourge in your Synagogues, and persecute them from City to City.
35. That upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel to the Blood of Zacharias Son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar.
36. Verily I say unto you, That all these things shall come upon this Generation.

IT requires no long Preface to shew, how applicable the Words I have read are to the Occasion of this Anniversary Day. 'Tis very well known, how deep a hand the *Romish Clergy* had in that treacherous and inhuman Massacre, that about 62 Years ago turn'd this flourishing Kingdom into a Field of Blood. And I need not tell you, how notoriously their Brethren in this Age have acted the same, or rather a worse part in the neighbouring Kingdom of *France*, sufficient to demonstrate that they are animated by the same Principles, and that the same Spirit of Persecution still reigns among them, for which their Predecessors stand so justly infamous in the Records

of the foregoing Ages. And if you trace all the several Persecutions of these latter Ages to their Centre and Spring, you'll easily discover it in the See of *Rome*; in her Skirts the Blood of the Saints, and the Martyrs of *Jesus* is to be found, and at her Door the Guilt of shedding it principally lies. So that the *Romish Hierarchy* may in these Characters, which our blessed Saviour gives of the vile Hypocrisy and persecuting Cruelty of the Scribes and Pharisees, see their own Picture drawn in lively but hideous Colours. If there be any Disparity, 'tis only in this, That the Colours are too faint for them; the Guilt of the *Romish Clergy* having by many degrees exceeded that which our blessed Lord here charges the Scribes and Pharisees with (as I shall have Occasion

to shew in drawing the Parallel between them.) And the Consideration of this Subject may be of great Use to us all. It may serve to illustrate some Part of the Prophecies of the New-Testament; it may confirm our Belief of the reformed Religion; (which is no other than uncorrupted Christianity) by discovering to us the genuine Characters of an Anti-christian Spirit, that have been so visible for several Ages in the Opposers of it; it may form in us a just Abhorrence of the Spirit of Persecution, and the Vanity of those hypocritical Pretences us'd to cover it; it may confirm our Faith in the Accomplishment of divine Threatnings against incorrigible Persecutors: And to add no more, it may excite our Thankfulness for being deliver'd from their destructive Fury and Violence. On these and many such Accounts the Prosecution of it may be very instructive to us.

I do by no Means intend to insist on all that is observable in this large Portion of Scripture I have now read; that wou'd carry me beyond the Bounds of Time. I shall therefore confine my self to Two General Heads, which are chiefly remarkable in these Words of our Lord. Viz.

I. That 'tis gross Hypocrisy for those that pretend to pay extraordinary Honour to dead Saints, to be violent Persecutors of living ones.

II. Where this Spirit of Persecution does reign in a Body of Men for several Ages together, those that do herein imitate their Predecessors, do thereby draw the Guilt of that Blood they have shed upon their own Heads, and will expose themselves to a Vengeance proportionable to so aggravated Guilt.

I need not enlarge to shew, how naturally these Observations arise from the Words: All therefore I shall do in prosecuting them, is,

First, To shew briefly, How justly our blessed Saviour applies these two Observations to the Scribes and Pharisees in his time. And then,

Secondly, Shew, How manifestly applicable they are to the Roman Bishops and Clergy in this Age. And,

Thirdly, To make some practical Reflections upon the whole. I begin with the

First Head, To shew, How justly our blessed Saviour applies these two Observations to the Scribes and Pharisees in his time.

And here I must distinctly consider,

I. His Charge of Hypocrisy against them, for paying so great Honour to dead Saints whilst they persecuted living ones.

II. His Threatnings denounc'd against them, for imitating the persecuting Cruelty of their Ancestors.

I. Let us consider, Our Saviour's Charge of Hypocrisy against them, for paying so great Honour to dead Saints while they persecuted living ones.

He tells them, They built the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnish'd the Sepulchres of the Righteous. They express'd hereby a Zeal for preserving their Memories, and transmitting their Fame and Honour to succeeding Generations. They pretended to own and reverence them as the faithful Servants of God; and many of them as Martyrs in his Cause, who sacrific'd their Lives to his Interest, and for the Maintenance of his true Worship in the World. Nay, they pretended hereby to condemn the Injustice and Cruelty of their Fathers, and were ready to say, If they had liv'd in their Days, they would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets, ver. 30. So far their Conduct seem'd plausible and fair. For we may observe by the way, that they went no farther than to keep up the Honour, and perpetuate the Memory of the Prophets and righteous Men of the foregoing Ages. Tho' they built their Tombs, and garnish'd their Sepulchres, they were far from dedicating Temples or Synagogues to them. Tho' they pretended to honour their Memories, yet they never went so far as to set them up as Objects of religious Worship, to address their Prayers or Praises to them, or make use of their Mediation. Nor did they set up their Images, or Shrines, or their pretend-

ed Reliques, as the Objects of publick Devotion. These monstrous Excesses are only to be found in the Church of Rome, who has carry'd her unwarrantable Respect to dead Saints, as well as Cruelty to living ones, to a far greater Height than the most degenerate Part of the Jewish Church ever did. (Of which more hereafter.)

If it be then enquir'd, What does our blessed Lord condemn them here for?

Ans. For their vile Hypocrisy, in pretending thus to honour the Prophets and righteous Men of former Ages, and to condemn the Injustice and Cruelty of their Fathers, in shedding their Blood; when yet they themselves were acted with the same Spirit of Malignity as their Fathers had been, and were as ready to persecute the faithful Messengers and Servants of God sent to them; nay, to embrace their Hands in their Blood, as ever their Fathers had been. And 'tis observable, that our Lord takes Occasion from their own Words to tell them of their Guilt. They call'd those that had kill'd the Prophets their Fathers. And upon this he tells them, They witnessed against themselves that they were the Children of such as kill'd the Prophets, q. d. You do well to call them your Fathers. For you are really their Children, not only by natural Descent, but a Resemblance of them in their malignant Enmity and Rage against the Prophets and Saints of God. Where we may observe, that our Lord by a just Irony, puts a Sense and Construction on their Words, different indeed from what they intended, but very conformable to their Temper and Actions. They pretended, that had they liv'd in the Days of their Fathers, they would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets. But he intimates to them, that their Practice would soon confute their Profession. He foresaw how soon they would with wicked Hands shed his own Blood. And that those Prophets, and Scribes, and Wise-Men, those holy Apostles, and other faithful Dispensers of his Gospel, whom he would send to them, would meet with no better Usage than he had done before them. That of them, Some they would kill and crucify, some they would scourge in their Synagogues, and persecute from City to City. And accordingly we may in the brief History of the Acts, see how exactly they verify'd our Lord's Prediction of their Cruelty.

And well might our blessed Lord charge them with gross Hypocrisy on this Account; for if they had had that real Veneration for the Prophets and righteous Men of former Ages they pretended to, by building their Tombs and garnishing their Sepulchres; they would have shew'd it by their profound Respect to those whom God in that very Age sent to them, especially to his incarnate Son, whom he sent as the great Prophet of his Church, to bring the most perfect Revelation of his Will; whose Doctrine had a more solemn Attestation from numerous and uncontrolled Miracles, and carry'd far brighter Characters of a divine Original, than what any former Prophets had deliver'd: Nay, in whose Person and unspotted Life there was a more resplendent Image of Godlike Purity and Holiness, than had been in any Prophet that ever went before him. And if their Malignity was so great, as to prompt them to reject that holy Doctrine with Scorn and Contempt; nay, if it would farther prompt them to embrace their Hands in the Blood of him that brought it; and to persecute his Apostles, and those whom he sent to publish it (tho' no way inferior to any former Prophets, either for extraordinary Gifts, or for most exemplary Piety and Holiness) with such restless Fury and Malice, (as we know that it actually did prompt them to do all this). This would sufficiently demonstrate, that the same Spirit of Diabolism and Malignity acted them, which they pretended to condemn in their Fathers; and that all their pretended Respect to former Prophets and Saints was no better than vile Dissimulation, that serv'd only to aggravate the Guilt of their persecuting Cruelty; and to render it more justly odious and detestable to God and Men. Our Saviour had

already some Experience of their malignant Enmity against him, and here foretells them, what farther mischievous Effects it wou'd produce, sufficient to justify his Charge against them; that they were the true Children of their Fathers, the genuine Seed of the Serpent, and such a Generation of Vipers, as their murderous Fathers had been.

Nor wou'd it have excus'd the Scribes and Pharisees in their Persecution of our Lord and his Apostles, or freed them from this Charge of Hypocrisy, shou'd they have pretended it was Prophets and righteous Men whose Blood their Fathers shed; whereas they prosecuted our Lord Jesus as a Deceiver of the People, and put him afterwards to Death as a Blasphemer, and prosecuted his Apostles, under the Notion of Enemies to the Law of Moses, and Movers of Sedition among the People. For their Fathers had, upon the same or the like Pretences, treated the Prophets of their Age with such barbarous Cruelty. They charg'd them as Troublers of Israel, Disturbers of the publick Peace, and Enemies to their Government, (as Abab did Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 17.) Or as Traytors to their Country, and such as sought not the Welfare, but the Hurt and Ruin of it, (As the Princes of Judah charg'd Jeremiah, chap. xxxviii. 4.) And this is but the common Method of all Persecutors, to cover their Cruelty under the Notion of Justice; and to charge those they persecute with some heinous Crimes, that they may be thought to deserve all the Severities they suffer. They do herein act as his Children, who is a Lyar as well as Murderer, and prompts them to palliate their hellish Barbarity, by false and odious Accusations. To murder Prophets and righteous Men under that Notion and Character, were openly to avow the Wickedness and Injustice of their own Actions, and manifestly condemn themselves. But to punish them under the Notion of Criminals, of seditious Disturbers of the publick Peace, of Hereticks, or Schismatics, this makes their Persecution carry some specious Appearance with it. This puts a fair Colour on their sanguinary Edicts and Laws, and the rigorous Execution of them, as if these were Acts of publick Justice. Nay, this makes their highest Acts of illegal Violence, their bloody Massacres themselves, pass for laudable Transports of Catholick Zeal. So that such false Accusations of those that are truly Prophets and righteous Men, is so far from extenuating, that it does but aggravate the Guilt of their Persecutors. 'Tis adding the Guilt of base Calumny and Slander, to that of Injustice and Cruelty. As if it were not enough to destroy their Lives without endeavouring to ruin their Reputation too. As if it were not enough to expose them unjustly to the most grievous Sufferings, without doing their utmost to rob them of the Pity and Compassion due to innocent Sufferers.

So justly does our Lord here reproach the Scribes and Pharisees for vile Hypocrisy, for pretending so great Veneration for the Prophets and Saints of former Ages, whom their Fathers had persecuted, when they themselves were ready to treat the greatest of all Prophets, and the most eminent Messengers that ever God sent to that sinful People, with the same unjust and barbarous Cruelty; when they were inclin'd even to go beyond their Fathers in the Guilt of Persecution.

I come then,

Secondly, To consider the Threatning our Lord denounces against them, for imitating the persecuting Cruelty of their Fathers.

To this Purpose he bids them at ver. 32. *Fill up the Measure of their Fathers.* 'Tis a severe Sarcastm, q. d.

"Go on to tread in the Steps of your murderous Fathers, add the Guilt of your persecuting Cruelty to the Measure of theirs, till the Ephah be full, and you ripe for destructive Vengeance.

And accordingly, he forewarns them both of that eternal and temporal Vengeance, their Guilt wou'd expose them to.

He forewarns them of the eternal Vengeance due to it, at ver. 33. *Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?*

And well might he call them a serpentine and viperous Brood, when they had in their Temper and Disposition so much of the Falshood and Cruelty of the old Serpent; and by their Actions, were ready to prove themselves his Children, who is a Lyar and a Murderer from the beginning, See John viii. 44. They were about to shew themselves the Seed of the Serpent with a Witness, when they were about to embroil their Hands in his Blood, who was the promised Seed of the Woman, who came to break the Head (and destroy the usurped Dominion) of the old Serpent, Gen. iii. 15.

And as all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men when impenitently persisted in, will expose them to the Damnation of Hell, much more will so heinous a Guilt as this of Persecution. For such Persecutors do of all Men, most openly oppose the Interest and Kingdom of God, by endeavouring to destroy those whom he employs as his Instruments to propagate Truth and Holiness in the World. And they do thereby manifestly abett the Devil's Cause, and endeavour to promote it by Methods most suitable to the Disposition of that accursed Spirit, viz. By Lying and Cruelty. They first endeavour to represent the faithful Servants of God, as the worst of Malefactors, and by the falsest Accusations wou'd make those of whom the World is not worthy, pass for the vilest of Men, that deserve not to live on the Face of the Earth; and having thus loaded them with the blackest Calumnies, they fall upon them with merciless Rage; having thus, as it were, cloth'd them in the Skins of wild Beasts, they expose them to be destroy'd. And can such as thus plainly act the Devil's Part in Falshood and blood-thirsty Cruelty, and that in order to the Support of his dark Kingdom, ever hope to escape the Damnation of Hell? No, sure they of all Men who partake so deeply of the Devil's greatest Guilt, must expect to share in his Punishment. They that act here so like incarnate Fiends, must expect to be doom'd to the same everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and for his fallen Angels, Matt. xxv. 42.

But our Lord also forewarns them of the temporal Vengeance they were to expect, when they had fill'd up the Measure of their Fathers Guilt.

And therefore, having foretold them at ver. 34. How they wou'd use these Prophets and wise Men and Scribes, whom he shou'd send to them, i. e. Those Apostles and other faithful Dispensers of his Gospel, (to whom he here gives the Titles usually given by the Jews to eminent Teachers) viz. That some of them they wou'd kill and crucify, others they wou'd scourge in their Synagogues, and persecute from City to City. He adds at ver. 35, 36. these awful Words, *That upon you may come all the righteous Blood shed on the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel, unto the Blood of Zacharias, the Son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the Temple and the Altar. Verily I say unto you, all these Things shall come upon this Generation.*

In speaking to this Threatning, I shall briefly enquire,

I. Who this Zacharias the Son of Barachias was?

II. And chiefly, In what Sense our Saviour foretells, *That all the righteous Blood shed on the Earth, shou'd come upon that Generation of the Jews; and how the Justice of such a Doom appears?*

I. We may here enquire, Who this Zacharias the Son of Barachias was?

Ans. I cannot think this was Zacharias, the Father of John the Baptist, because neither does the Scripture mention whose Son he was; nor is there any credible Account of his being slain at all, much less between the Porch and the Altar.

And for Zacharias one of the lesser Prophets, that was the Son of Barachias, we neither read of his being slain, nor cou'd he be slain between the Porch and Altar, when the Temple in his Time was but a building.

And for the Zacharias mention'd by Josephus, he was the Son of Baruch, not of Barachias; and he is not so much as mention'd by that Author, under the Notion of a Prophet at all, but only a good Man.

I therefore incline most to their Opinion who understand this of *Zacharias the Son of Jehoiadah the Priest*, who, because he reprov'd the People for transgressing the Commandments of the Lord, (particularly by their Revolt from the Purity of his Worship) was stoned with Stones at the Commandment of the King, (viz. *Josiah*) in the Court of the House of the Lord, 2 Chron. xxiv. 21, &c.

And whereas 'tis objected that this *Zacharias* was the Son of *Jehoiadah*, 'tis answer'd, That *Jehoiadah* and *Barachias* signify the same Thing in the Hebrew Tongue, and 'twas usual with the Jews to change those Names in which the Letters of the Name *Jehoiadah* were found.

And whereas 'tis objected, that this *Zacharias* was slain many Ages before, I think there is no Force in that Objection if it be duly consider'd, that our Lord speaking of all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, does very fitly mention the Blood of *Abel* shed before the giving of the Law, the Blood of *Zacharias* the last Prophet, whose Blood is mention'd in Scripture as shed under the Law: And he had already mention'd the Blood of his own Apostles and Teachers, whom he foretells themselves would shed, and thereby fill up the Measure of their Fathers Guilt. And this *Zacharias* seems fitly conjoin'd with *Abel*; because as *Abel's* Blood was said to cry to Heaven for Vengeance on him that shed it, so *Zacharias* is particularly recorded to have said at the shedding of his innocent Blood, *The Lord look upon it and require it*, 2 Chron. xxiv. 22.

And the Words following render it the more probable, that this was the *Zacharias* our Lord intended, because, he seems in Allusion to the particular manner of his Death, to cry out, *O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the Prophets, &c.* But,

II. It concerns us chiefly to enquire, In what Sense our Saviour foretells, *That all the righteous Blood shed on the Earth, should come on that Generation, from the Blood of righteous Abel, &c.* And how the Justice of such a Doom appears?

Ans. We must by no means suppose that God inflicts upon any one sinful Generation, a greater Punishment than their own particular Guilt deserves.

But we must consider, That God in his Dealings with a Nation, or collective Body of Men, is not wont to come to the Execution of destructive Vengeance upon them, till after long Exercise of Patience, and till they have fill'd up the Measure of Publick or National Guilt. And we must also consider, That when succeeding Generations that are told of the Sins of their Ancestors, and of the Monitory Judgments of God, inflicted on the Account of them, instead of being warn'd thereby, do tread in the Steps of their wicked Ancestors, and imitate them in their Provocations, this greatly aggravates their National Guilt, and ripens them for destructive Vengeance. And accordingly, when a just God comes to execute destructive Vengeance on such a People, tho' it do not in reality exceed the aggravated Demerit of the present Generation, (for on the contrary, no temporal Punishments equal the Desert of such Sins) yet it is intended by him, as a Mark of his just Displeasure against the Sins of their Ancestors too; whose Guilt the present Generation have in some Measure drawn upon their own Heads, by approving and imitating their Example. So that the Guilt of former Ages may be said to come on the present Generation, when they are expos'd to that desolating Wrath of his, which he is not wont to inflict upon a People, till they have for a long Tract of Time, and usually for several successive Generations, persisted in the same heinous and crying Sins. God would deal with the present Race of the malignant Jews with that inexorable Severity, which tho' it was no greater than they themselves had merited, yet it was greater than he was wont to inflict on one single Generation, and was design'd to be a Declaration and Testimony of his just Indignation against all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth to that very Day; and particularly all that had

been shed by their guilty Ancestors, and to which they had been, as it were, accessory, by following their Example.

And this I take to be the true Account of the Sense of this Threatning, and a clear Vindication of the Equity of it.

And accordingly, we know that this Threatning of our Lord had, about Forty Years after, a full but dreadful Accomplishment. On this Generation came all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, in such an astonishing and terrible Vengeance, as no Nation cou'd ever parallel before. Divine Wrath came upon them even to the uttermost, in such a Succession of dismal destructive Calamities, as not only ruin'd their Capital City, but ras'd all the Foundations of their Civil Polity, and scatter'd them as Vagabonds over the Face of the Earth, to be the standing Monuments of divine Severity to all successive Ages. Such a dreadful Thing is it to have the horrid Guilt of Persecution handed down in a Nation from one Age to another.

The Blood of God's Prophets and Saints, when thus shed thro' several successive Generations, will have a loud Cry, and at last draw down such amazing Destruction, as shall convince the World, that tho' a patient God bore long, yet he will at last terribly avenge so heinous Guilt.

Having thus consider'd our blessed Saviour's Charge against the Jews, and the awful Doom he passes on them, I proceed (according to what I propos'd)

Secondly, To shew, how manifestly applicable all this is to the Roman Pope and Clergy.

And 'tis observable, That tho' our Saviour intend'd this Charge against the Body of the Jewish Nation, yet he particularly levels it against the Scribes and the Pharisees, who, as they made a greater Pretension to Sanctity than others, so their having a chief Hand in all the Persecutions of that Age, did render their Hypocrisy the more notorious and detestable. So, tho' our Lord's Charge and Threatning be applicable to all those Popish Countries, in which this Guilt of Persecution is continued, yet 'tis in a more particular Manner applicable to the Papal Hierarchy; who, as they make higher Pretensions to Sanctity than others, so their having the most guilty Hand in shedding the Blood of Saints, renders their Hypocrisy the more manifest and justly odious. And therefore 'tis as to them, I shall chiefly draw the Parallel, not excluding those that concur with them, as the Executioners of their bloody Cruelty. And,

I. I shall consider, How they have imitated the Hypocrisy of the Scribes and Pharisees, in their high Pretensions of honouring dead Saints, while they persecuted living ones.

That they highly pretend to honour deceased Saints, I need not prove. They themselves glory in it, and are ready in their blind Zeal, to treat all those as Enemies to the Saints, or Despisers of them, who dare not joyn with them in those unwarrantable Excesses of Devotion which they pay unto them. They not only build their Tombs and garnish their Sepulchres, but choose to erect their Altars there, and to dedicate Temples and Days to their Honour. Nay, if they can pretend to any Reliques of their Bodies, they are preserv'd in costly Cabinets, and on the Days dedicated to them, are expos'd with great Solemnity, as Objects of the Peoples Devotion. Nay, to such a Height is their Idolatry as well as Superstition come, that they have made it an Article of their Religion, That the Saints are to be invocated or pray'd unto: So that this incommunicable Branch of divine Worship (which supposes an unlimited Knowledge, and Presence, and Power in the Object of it) is most injuriously paid to meer Creatures. Besides, they have entrench'd upon the peculiar Honour of Christ as our only Mediator, by setting them up as Mediators of Intercession for us. Nay, so manifestly have they transcrib'd the Copy of the Heathens in their Demon-Worship, that the Images of the Saints are set up in their Temples, as well as those of Christ or the Holy Trinity, and have the like external Homage, of Incense,

Incense, Kissing, Bowing, or Prostration paid to them. And this gross Violation of the Second Command is made an essential part of their *Faith and Worship*. And the general *allowed Practice* of that Church is yet more scandalous than their *Doctrine* it self. The Stream of the People's Worship is in a great measure turn'd from God to the blessed Virgin and other Saints. Her *Psalter* is their common *Manual*; *Oblations and Vows* to her or some other Saint, and *Pilgrimages* to this or that celebrated *Shrine* of theirs, makes up the chief part of the Laity's Devotion. And to recommend this sort of Devotion the more to the ignorant but superstitious Vulgar, a great part of their Preaching is taken up in the extravagant Praises of this or that Saint, and those made up of such *fabulous* and often *ridiculous* Relations concerning them, as carry the evident Marks of Forgery and Falshood engraven upon them.

So that the Scribes and Pharisees kept within tolerable Bounds of Respect when they contented themselves with building the Tombs of the Prophets, and garnishing the Sepulchres of the Righteous. Whereas the Romish Clergy have exceeded all just Bounds in the Honour they pretend to pay to them, having made all the *Idolatries* and *Superstitions* of the Pagan Religion in their *Demon-Worship* their Pattern: Nay, in some Instances they have gone far beyond it, as particularly in *Rising the Tombs and Sepulchres of their Saints* to furnish their Altars from thence with Objects of Devotion. A height of Extravagance and Folly that seems peculiar to themselves.

And now one would expect that those who pretend so highly to honour deceased Saints, should proportionably esteem and respect living ones. Those that are so solicitous to celebrate the Piety of Primitive Christians and Martyrs, should reverence the like Piety and Holiness where-ever they see any eminent Patterns of it in the Age wherein they live. Whereas if these pretended Votaries of dead Saints do treat those very Persons of the present Age who are their genuine Successors in maintaining the same divine Truths, and in adorning them with the same exemplary Holiness of Life, not only with Hatred and Contempt, but with malignant Rage and Cruelty, 'tis manifest that their Practice confutes all their specious Pretensions, and convicts them of vile and odious Hypocrisy.

And yet this has been most notoriously the Guilt and the Character of the Romish Clergy, ever since their Corruptions came to a considerable Height, and the Spirit of Persecution first begun to reign among them. O what Torrents of righteous and innocent Blood have they shed for above six Centuries together, far beyond what was ever shed by Rome Pagan in all her most furious Persecutions!

In order to our taking a brief View of this their Guilt, we must begin with those eminent Professors of uncorrupted Christianity, who during the 11th, 12th, 13th, and 14th Centuries, so early opposed the growing and scandalous Corruptions of the Roman Clergy and Church, and were known in Italy under the Name of Paterines and Cathari; In Piedmont under the Names of Vallenses, not from Waldo of Lyons (for they were known by that Name before he ever appear'd) but from the Valleys they inhabited; In the lower Part of France under the Name of Albigenes, from the City of Alby; of Petro-brusians and Henricians, from Peter and Henry Brui, two eminent Preachers among them; and Waldenses, or the Poor of Lyons, from Waldo a Citizen of Lyons, and from the Poverty they profess in opposition to the excessive Wealth of the Romish Clergy; In England they were call'd Lollards, and afterwards Wicliffites, from two eminent Leaders they follow'd. In other Places they were call'd Picards, from some of them settling in Picardy. (Not to mention the Names of Paf-sagieri and Turlupius, given them from their fleeing from one Place to another, and being often forc'd to take up in those desolate Places that seem'd rather fit for the Habitation of Wolves than of Men.)

Against these sincere Professors of the uncorrupted

Gospel of Christ, the Roman Bishop and Clergy soon begun to bend their furious Zeal.

Pope Alexander the Third begun with Cursing Waldo of Lyons and all his Adherents. And afterwards at the Council of Tours in France, decreed, That they and all their Favourers should be excommunicated, and that none should buy of them or sell them any thing. As if he intended a literal Accomplishment of what was foretold, Rev. xiii. 17.

Pope Lucius the Third, in the same 12th Century, denounc'd his Anathema against them, and decreed them to be left to the secular Judge to be punish'd, and threaten'd all Civil Magistrates, that were negligent in punishing them, with Excommunication.

Pursuant to these Decrees Ildephonsus the King of Arragon publish'd a cruel Edict against them, exposing them to the usual Punishment of Traytors.

But Pope Innocent the Third was their most inveterate Enemy. To his Contrivance that Tribunal of the Inquisition owes its first Original, which has for so many Ages become so infamous for monstrous arbitrary Injustice and for inhuman Cruelty. (Tho' it receiv'd not its present Form and Establishment till the Popedom of Gregory the Ninth.) 'Tis he employ'd Dominick and those of his Order in that hellish Office; and it was by the restless Diligence of these busy Inquisitors that so many Thousands of the innocent Servants of Christ were deliver'd over to the secular Power; The Magistrates thro' the Dread of Papal Excommunication becoming the same Executioners of the Clergy's unjust Sentence.

And yet because the Inquisitors made not so quick Dispatch in their Endeavours to extirpate these pretended Hereticks as this Pope desir'd, he found out a more expeditious way to destroy them in the lower Part of France, where he found they were greatly spreading themselves. To that end he rais'd several Croysados against them, sending his Legate to command them, whom the Popish Clergy assist'd by animating the blind Bigots of their Party to take up Arms under the Banner of the Cross for exterminating these Hereticks, and to encourage them the more in that good Work, he promis'd them the same Privileges that had been granted to those that took up Arms to recover the Holy Land, (i. e. full Remission of their Sins, and if they died in the Cause, an immediate Entrance into Heaven.) And upon this Encouragement those Cut-throats flock'd in so fast, as to amount to the Number sometimes of above an 100000, and once to 500000. And though they did not always meet with equal Success either under the Legate or under Simon Earl of Montfort, (who was their General afterwards) yet P. Perionius a Popish Historian, confesses, that above a Million of these poor People in France alone were slain in these holy Wars rais'd against them. What the Spirit of that Pope himself was, appears from the Decrees of the Council of Lateran under him, that orders the deposing all Temporal Lords that do not exterminate all Hereticks out of their Dominions. And how conformable the Disposition of his Legate that commanded the foremention'd Croysados was to his, we may see by one remarkable Instance of his flaming Zeal, That at the storming the Town of Beziers he gave strict Orders to spare none. And when he was told, there were many good Catholicks among them, he refused to recall his Orders, but cry'd out, Kill them all, the Lord knows who are his. And thus in that one City were 60000 murder'd.

It would require more time than I can now employ, to shew, how Papal Fury follow'd these poor People, whom these Violences dispers'd into Germany, Bohemia, Flanders, England, Calabria, Piedmont, and other Places, destroying about a Million more of them. I shall only observe, That the Court of Rome was restless in Solliciting the Assistance of Princes, and of the Secular Power to extirpate them (from many of whom they obtain'd such barbarous Edicts as that of Frederick II. the Emperor of Germany) that they did often engage Princes in horrible Acts of Cruelty against their

their innocent Subjects, (As besides the Persecution of those in *Bohemia*, we may see in the monstrous Butchery acted under *Lewis the Twelfth*, against the Inhabitants of *Cabrieres* and *Merindol*.) That the *Arch-Bishops* and *Bishops* in Communion with that *See* were generally zealous to second the Pope's Intentions; and above all, the *Monks* and *Friars* were every where the busy *Incendiaries* to raise the Fury of the blind Rabble against these faithful Servants of Christ. In a Word, Wherever these poor People were dispers'd, the malignant Zeal of the *Roman Bishops* follow'd them; and had all *Secular Princes* been as devoid of Humanity and Compassion as they were, these eminent Witnesses of the Truth of Christ had been entirely cut off from the Face of the Earth. But that Providence of God that suffer'd their Dispersion into so many Parts of *Europe*, provided some Shelter for them; and a Remnant of them was preserved to be the Seed of that more glorious and general Reformation that broke out in the beginning of the 16th Century.

And now if you ask, what had these poor People done to excite all this Storm of *Papal Fury* against them? The *Roman Bishops* and *Clergy* will tell you, they were *Hereticks*. But if you ask, what *Heresies* they were chargeable with? I will give you a brief Account of it, and that from unsuspected Witnesses, even from those *Inquisitors* employ'd to extirpate them, or from others that were their avowed Enemies.

And I may justly mention *Reynerius the Inquisitor's* famous Testimony concerning them, who tells us, "This *Seet* of the *Leonists*, (another Name for these Professors of the Truth) was most dangerous on three Accounts, the first is their long Continuance; some say from the Days of *Pope Sylvester*, others from the very Apostles themselves. The second is, The vast Extent of it through so many Parts of *Europe*. The third is, That this *Seet* had a great Shew of Piety, liv'd justly before Men, believed all the Articles contain'd in the Apostles Creed, only they blasphem'd the *Roman Church* and *Clergy*, they reject'd their Sacraments and Saints, and other Customs or Rites of the Church.

To this Testimony, I may add that of *Claudius Sesselius*, *Arch-Bishop* of *Turin*, who after a particular Account of their Doctrine (very conformable in the Main to that of the Reformed Churches, and opposite to the *Papal Supremacy*, *Invocation of Saints*, *Purgatory*, *Transubstantiation*, &c.) concludes it with this Character of them, "That setting aside what they held in Opposition to the *Romish Faith* and Religion, (i. e. what the *Romish Church* has superadded to Christianity) They did for the most Part lead a more pure Life than other Christians. That they swore not except forc'd to it, seldom took the Name of God in vain, honestly perform'd their Promises, &c. Even the most inveterate *Popish Historians* own a great Resemblance between their Doctrines and that of the present Protestant Churches, (and our own have clearly demonstrated it from those *Popish Historians* that give us the truest Account of their Opinions.) So that I shall only subjoin the Testimony of that celebrated Historian *Thuanus*, Who tells us, "That the true Cause of the War undertaken against the *Waldenses* was, that they abhor'd the *Antichristianism*, the *Tyranny* and Errors of the *See of Rome*, and by the true preaching of the Gospel endeavour'd to withdraw the People from their Obedience to it." And to the like Effect speaks *Jul. Paradinus*, and *Bern. Girardus*.

And indeed there needed no other Crimes than these, to expose these innocent Lambs of Christ to the Rage of the *Roman Wolves*, and make them greedy of sucking their Blood. They bore a faithful Testimony against their gross Corruptions and Errors by the Purity of their Doctrine; against their Usurpation and Tyranny, by casting off their unjust Yoke; and against their abominable Wickedness of all kinds, by their exemplary Humility and Holiness. And this was an Offence not to be forgiven by the *See of Rome* and its sworn Vassals, whom

their secular Interest and Grandure oblig'd to maintain these Corruptions, and to oppose such an unwelcome Reformation.

Upon the whole, we have as satisfactory Evidence as can be desired, that these Professors of the Truth were the most eminent Lights of the Age wherein they liv'd, for Purity of Doctrine, and their Adversaries themselves are forc'd to own the exemplary Holiness of their Lives. And we are sure our blessed Saviour will not disown his faithful Disciples, because others unjustly brand them as *Hereticks*. He will not cast them out of his Communion, because his pretended Vicars have denounc'd their *Anathemas* against them. He sees and will approve his own Image shining in them, whatever false Colours their bloody Persecutors have endeavour'd to paint them with. Nay, he will regard all their Enemies unjust Calumnies as an Addition to their barbarous Cruelties, and will charge upon them the Guilt of their infamous Lies against his innocent Servants, as well as inhuman Murders of them.

Having given this brief hint of the Persecutions raised against these early Witnesses of the Truth of Christ, in Opposition to the *Romish Corruptions*, I shall not enlarge on those they have rais'd during these two last Centuries, since the Light of the Reformation so clearly broke out. They are too well known to need a particular Enumeration. And therefore I shall content my self with a few Instances, but sufficient to shew, that the Spirit of Persecution that begun in the *Papal See* in the 12th Century, was not extinguish'd but inflamed to a greater Height during the 16th and 17th.

The Number of those whose Blood has been shed under the Forms of Law and Justice is amazingly great. As little noise as that merciless Tribunal of the Inquisition makes at present, it did in the beginning of the Reformation so vigorously bestir it self, that *Vergerius* (who had good Opportunity to know it when employ'd as an Agent for the *See of Rome*) confesses, that it had in about thirty Years Space destroyed 150000 Persons. I shall not insist on the Flames that *Papal Zeal* kindled in *England*, and most other Places of *Europe* where the Protestant Religion had not the Protection of the Civil Power to shelter them from *Papal Fury*. They have furnish'd most Nations around us with a large Book of their own Martyrs.

I shall rather take Notice, that the *See of Rome* never scrupled to encourage the most illegal Violences in order to the Suppression of what they call Heresy, but have hallowed the most inhuman Massacres, when acted to propagate what they call the Catholic Faith. I might to this Purpose instance in 36000 which the Duke of *Alva* boasted he had destroy'd in the Low-Countries. The Massacre in *Paris* and other Parts of *France* under *Charles the 9th* consum'd about 80000. And that acted in this Kingdom destroy'd near 200000. And 'tis but 18 Years since the present French King, contrary to all publick Faith, dragoon'd his own innocent Protestant Subjects, forc'd many of them by variety of inhuman Barbarities to abjure their Religion, condemn'd those that persevered, to the Prisons or Gallies, ras'd all their Temples, reduc'd above 800 flourishing Churches to deplorable Desolation, banish'd their faithful Pastors, suppress'd all publick Exercise of their Religion, and expos'd such as in the *Cevennes* kept up their religious Assemblies to all the rigour of military Execution, forcing them at last to take up Arms in their own Defence.

And that the Guilt of all this is most justly chargeable on the *See of Rome*, is from hence evident, that they have either been the first Advisers to, or at least the Approvers and Encouragers of all these Acts of Barbarity. It was *Pope Gregory the 13th*, that upon the welcome News of the Massacre of *Paris*, call'd the Cardinals together to thank God for so great a Blessing conferr'd on the *Roman See*, and publish'd a Jubilee to give Thanks to God for destroying in *France* the Enemies of the Truth, and of the Church. And yet what the Pope thus

applauded was so monstrous a Complication of Treachery and Cruelty, that the Popish Historians themselves, who have any spark of Honour or Honesty, cannot mention it without Abhorrence, and speak of that as a Scandal to their Nation and Religion, which the Court of Rome celebrates as a meritorious Service to God and the Church. And for the infamous Massacre of Ireland, it was Pope Urban the 8th that encouraged and animated the bloody Actors of it to persist in so good a Work, by promising to all that ventur'd their Lives in it, Absolution from all Sins, Transgressions, and Crimes, how heinous and atrocious soever. Strange! That the shedding of innocent Blood (which we reckon a Sin of the deepest dye) shou'd in the Opinion of the Roman Popes, be an Action so meritorious, as to be capable of expiating the foulest Crimes, and washing those white as Snow, whose Sins were as Scarlet and Crimson before! And for what the French King has done in order to the Suppression of the Reformed Religion in France, was not only done at the earnest Solicitation of the Popish Clergy, but his Zeal herein was applauded by Pope Innocent the 11th, who express the great Satisfaction he had in seeing this pestilent Heresy thus extirpated in France, and tells that Prince he had acquir'd immortal Praises thereby. Nay, his Clergy have ever since in their fulsome Panegyrics to that ambitious Prince, celebrated this Atchievement of his, as the Principal Glory of his Reign. And that the present Pope Clement the 7th has given his Approbation to all this unrighteous, perfidious, and cruel Treatment of these innocent Sufferers, I shall have occasion under the next Head to observe.

And how can there be a more notorious Instance of vile Hypocrisy than this? For those that pretend so excessive Veneration for primitive Martyrs and Saints, not only to hate and reproach those in their own Age, that maintain the very same Doctrine, and most of them recommend it by the same blameless and remarkable Purity of Life, but to prosecute them with Fire and Sword, and endeavour their utter Extirpation, either by procuring and executing sanguinary Laws, or (where that fails) by perfidious Violence, and furious Massacres.

And let not the Romish Clergy think that the affixing the odious Name of Hereticks on these righteous Persons, whose Blood they thus prodigally shed, will free them from this Charge of Hypocrisy, and from the Guilt of Persecution. For then might the Scribes and Pharisees vindicate themselves from our Saviour's Charge here, since they prosecuted himself as a Deceiver and Blasphemer, and fix'd this Character of Heresy upon his holy Religion and the Professors of it. See Acts xxiv. 14. 'Tis not in the Power of opprobrious Names to change the Nature of things. Our Lord will own his Truth, though Men call it Heresy. And he will know his Sheep, tho' those call them ravening Wolves, to whom that Name does more justly belong. So that we are as sure, that the Romish Clergy are guilty of this detestable Hypocrisy, as we are sure, that the Reformed Religion is the Doctrine of the Gospel, and that many of these Sufferers for it were Persons of eminent Piety and Holiness.

I come then,

II. To shew, how applicable this Threatning which our Saviour here denounces against the Scribes and Pharisees, is to the Roman Pope and Clergy.

And to that Purpose, I need only observe, that as their Persecutions have beyond all Comparison exceeded all that was done by the Jews in Cruelty and Rage, so the same Spirit of Persecution has reign'd among them for about five or six hundred Years together. And there is one thing in which they have far out-done these Scribes and Pharisees in my Text. They indeed condemn'd the Injustice and Cruelty of their Fathers, and said, if they had liv'd in their Days, they would not have been Partakers with them in the Blood of the Prophets; but the Romish Clergy are so far from condemning what their Predecessors have done of this kind, that on the contrary

they openly applaud what they have done, and by commending as well as imitating their Example, evidently draw the Guilt thereof upon their own Heads. I have already shewn, How the Roman Popes have made themselves, accessory to the Blood shed by their most violent Bigots, in the most savage Massacres, by their loud Encomiums bestow'd on the bloody Actors. But we have in this Age a most remarkable Instance of what I am now asserting, in the furious Bull publish'd by the present Pope Clement the 12th, against the Protestants of the Cevennes. He there calls them, "The cursed Remainers of the old Albigenes." He tells us, He hop'd this "terrible Pestilence had been long ago extinguish'd by the Piety of Lewis the Great. So that in the Pope's Dialogue, the French Monarch's violating his publick Edicts, letting loose his brutish Soldiers to exercise their savage Barbarities on his innocent Subjects, and violent Endeavours to cut off their Name and Memorial, are so many eminent Acts of Piety towards God. But sure this is such Piety as our blessed Lord speaks of, when he tells us, "That the Time should come when his Disciples (should not only be cast out of Synagogues, (i. e. excommunicated) but even that those who kill'd them should think they did God service, John xvi. 1. Well! But to re-animate the pious Zeal of Lewis the Great, the Pope tells us, "That he has thought fit to imitate the laudable Examples of his Predecessors in the like Cases. And the better to encourage and excite the Minds of the Faithful, to exterminate this Rabble of Miscreants, who, in all Ages of the World, have been equally odious to God and to Cæsar; he has, in pursuance of the Power of Binding and Loosing, wherewith our blessed Lord has invested his chief Apostle, freely and voluntarily granted to all those that engage in so holy a Warfare, (in Case they shou'd fall in Battle) a plenary Remission of Sins, whatever they are.

Here we manifestly see, that notwithstanding all that has been written to vindicate the Innocence of those antient Professors of the Gospel, and to demonstrate the Injustice and Cruelty of their Persecutors, the present See of Rome is so far from condemning what their Predecessors have done, that they applaud all their barbarous Cruelties, and propose them as laudable Patterns for their Imitation. Nay, they openly avow, That the destroying of Hereticks is still so meritorious an Action in their Judgment, as to expiate all other Crimes, and entitle all those that dye in this Papal War, (how profligate Sinners soever they have formerly been) to a plenary Absolution of all Sins, whatever they are.

And what could the See of Rome do more than this, to make themselves Accessaries to all the Villanies and Murders their Predecessors have been guilty of? What could they do more to bring all the righteous Blood shed for these five or six hundred Years since the first Persecution rais'd against these Albigenes, on their own Heads? If our Lord told the Scribes and Pharisees, that all the righteous Blood shed on the Earth, &c. shou'd come on that Generation, because they persisted to imitate the Example of their Fathers, tho' in Words they disavow'd and condemn'd it; how much more will all the innocent Blood of those faithful Professors of the uncorrupted Gospel of Christ, shed in such plentiful Streams for so many Ages, come upon the Papal Hierarchy, when they not only imitate, but celebrate the Examples of their persecuting Predecessors; and even glory in following their Steps in the worst Instances of their malignant Cruelty? Strange Blindness and Obduracy of Mind! That those Earthquakes that Rome had so lately felt, shou'd raise no Convulsions in the Consciences of its Pope and Cardinals, and never once remind them of the Guilt of righteous Blood that has so long lain upon them! That in the very Face of such monitory Judgments, they shou'd persist in the same Spirit of Persecution; and when themselves were threaten'd with the Vengeance of God from Heaven, shou'd express such a furious Zeal for the Extirpation of a poor innocent People from the Face of the Earth, from whom they have received no other Provocation than that they will not sacrifice their

their Consciences and Religion to the Will of their Persecutors, or tamely stand still to have their Throats cut for refusing it! What? Is there not yet Blood enough on the scarlet Robes of their Popes and Cardinals, that they are solicitous to dip them yet deeper in it! But this is the most compendious Way to fill up the Measure of their Predecessors Guilt. But thus was it foretold, That in Rome Papal should be found the Blood of Prophets, and of Saints, and of all that were slain on the Earth, Rev. xviii. ult.

And we may also see how forward the Popish Clergy are to conspire with the See of Rome in this heinous Guilt. No sooner does the Bishop of Nismes receive the Pope's Bull, but he immediately issues out his circular Letters to his Clergy, and in Obedience to the Commands of his holy Father the Pope, and of his most godly Prince, Lewis the 14th, (as he styles him) enjoins all his Clergy, in the Bowels of Christ, to warn all their Flocks against giving the least Entertainment or Succour to these Protestants, and to excite them to cut them off by the Sword. And to this Purpose, he recommends to them the Privileges promis'd in the Pope's Bull, and the Example of Lewis the Great, who, (saith he) by the Advice of his Holiness, and the Bishops of his Realm, has wholesomely determin'd not to leave one Heretick alive in his Dominions. And is not this the genuine Language of such Hypocrites as our Saviour describes, to beseech Men by the Bowels of Christ, not to succour, but destroy such as profess his true Religion, and have taken up Arms only in their own necessary Defence, and not till after long Exercise of their Patience under the most barbarous Treatment; not till the Court of France had rejected all their Complaints; not till they were cast out of the Royal Protection, and abandon'd, as if they had been so many Beasts of Prey, to such as had a Mind to destroy them; not till they were reduc'd to the last Extremities, and had the grand Law of Self-Preservation against Cut-throats and Murderers to justify their Arms. And yet these are the poor innocent Flock of Christ, for whose Blood the Roman Wolves so earnestly thirst. And shall we scruple to call them Wolves, because of their Sheeps-clothing, when we see their bloody Jaws, and hear them yelling for the Prey? When our Saviour has given us such a Mark to distinguish them by, telling us, By their Fruits we shall know them, Matt. xvii. 20.

You see then, how evidently the Blood of some Millions of Christ's faithful Servants lies at the Door of the Papal Hierarchy; and how openly they avow and glory in shedding of it. I will not indeed presume positively to say, that it will be requir'd of this Generation; but I think I may safely affirm, it will be requir'd and most terribly aveng'd. I am sure I may commend those awful Words of our blessed Lord to their Consideration, Ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell? And I cannot think it altogether improbable, that the Time is hastning when a provok'd God will avenge the Blood of his Servants at the Hand of Rome (Papal), that Mother of Harlots, and Abominations of the Earth, which has thus made her self drunk with the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus. This open Justification of their persecuting Cruelty, in the Face of the World, in such an Age of Light as this, seems to be a comfortable Omen that the Time is not far off. And who knows, but that as these Albigenes were the first, so their Successors the Sevennois shall be the last that shall feel the Effects of Rome's blood-thirsty Malignity!

It now remains, that we make some practical Reflexions upon the foregoing Discourse. And,

I. It may serve to establish us in the Reformed Religion, to see such evident Characters of an Antichristian Spirit in the Enemies and Opposers of it.

Idolatry and persecuting Cruelty, are the two grand Characters of mystical Babylon, which we are told was the City which (in St. John's time) reigned over the Kings of the Earth, which all know to be Rome. That it is not meant of Rome Pagan, besides manifold other Ar-

guments that may be suggested from chap. xvii. of the Revelations, there are two Arguments that, I think, carry sufficient Demonstration with them; the one is, that that City of Rome should then become the Mother of Fornications, and shed those Torrents of Blood, when it should be divided into ten Kingdoms; but this Division of the Roman Empire happen'd not, till after Rome had embrac'd the Christian Faith. And these ten Kings were to receive their Power at the same Hour with the Beast, (i. e. The Roman Empire as become idolatrous and persecuting.) The other is, that when St. John saw Rome thus become the Mother of Fornications and Abominations of the Earth, and drunk with the Blood of Saints, he wondered with great Admiration. But what Ground could there be for such Astonishment and Wonder, to see Rome Pagan involv'd in Idolatry, and persecuting the Christian Church. Idolatry was the Religion of their Ancestors; and 'tis no Wonder at all, that it should prompt them to be Enemies of those that came to overturn their Altars, and to draw the World from their establish'd Worship. But it might well appear amazing to St. John, and Matter of great Admiration, to see the Gentile-Idolatry re-advanc'd by Rome Christian and Papal, and to behold her shedding the Blood of those that adhered to the uncorrupted Gospel of Christ, in far greater Streams than Rome Pagan had ever done before.

And truly it appears to me very remarkable and worthy of our Observation, that at the Time when this persecuting Spirit first appear'd in the Papal See, these Albigenes and Waldenses, these early Witnesses of the Truth of Christ, did generally conspire in condemning Rome as that mystical Babylon describ'd in the Revelations of St. John. And 'tis observable that they grounded their Opinion on these three Characters, The Idolatry they perceived then growing apace in the Romish Church: The Encroachments of the Papal Power on temporal Princes, who by a tame Submission to the Papal Authority, gave their Power to the Beast, and became his Lictors to execute his bloody persecuting Decrees. And the Spirit of Tyranny and Persecution which they then begun to feel, and of which they found the See of Rome to be the Source and Spring.

Nay, there were some found in the Communion of the Romish Church it self, that fix'd this Character on the See and Court of Rome. And many of them particularly insist on Persecution and Cruelty as the Character of Antichrist. The Words of Rupertus, Abbot of Tuits, are so remarkable to this purpose, that I think them worthy of Recital. For in his Commentary on Rev. xiii. 15. Where we read, that the second Beast gave Life to the Image of the first Beast, that it should both speak, and cause as many as would not worship the Image of the Beast should be killed, he makes this just Remark: "That Christ does not so, neither his Prophets and Apostles teach so; nor have Christian Kings received any such Instructions to kill Men, or to make them think the Worship of Christ is to be stain'd with Blood; for the true God does not desire any forced but voluntary Service. Wherefore by this Mark especially, he (i. e. the Beast spoken of) will make it evident to all that have any Understanding, that indeed he is the Antichrist, that he is not Christ, but according to his Name, opposite and contrary to him. He is Christ that sheds his own Blood. He is Antichrist that sheds the Blood of others."

And truly this Character is so just and so conformable to the Holy Scriptures, that methinks we cannot view the Papacy in this Glass without observing the Marks of Antichristianism in it. Let us but behold the See of Rome establishing so gross Idolatries and Superstitions by their Authority and Influence; and propagating them by such a series of Persecutions and Cruelties. Let us behold her in her Inquisition-Tribunals with her Racks and Strappadoes, with her Wheels and Gibbets, with her Fire and Faggot; let us view her raising her Crossadoes, and inspiring blind Cut-throats and Dragoons with Rage and savage Barbarity against all those whom she is pleas'd

to call *Hereticks*; and prosecuting their utter Extirpation with *Fire and Sword*; let's see her breathing out *Destruction to the Bodies*, and uncharitable Sentences of *Damnation against the Souls* of all that dissent from her grossest Corruptions; let us behold her triumphing in the Ruin of oppressed Innocents, and rejoicing over the slain Witnesses of Christ, and even glutted with their righteous Blood, and sure we can discern in her no Marks of the Dove-like chaste and innocent Spouse of Christ, no Resemblance to that merciful Saviour, who came not to destroy the Lives of Men but to save them, and who rebuk'd the irregular Zeal of his Disciples when they called for Fire from Heaven against the inhospitable Samaritans; nay, who (as the Abbot of Tuits well-observ'd) came to shed his own Blood, not that of others. But we are sure that Rome Papal, when it appears in these true but hideous Colours, does bear a great and manifest Resemblance to that Beast that was to make War with the Saints, and to overcome them, Rev. xiii. 7. And to that mystical Babylon that is the Mother of Fornication, &c. and was drunk with the Blood of Saints and Martyrs, Rev. xvii. 5.

And so confident were the poor *Albigenses* of the Truth hereof, that 'tis observable, when Simon Earl of Montfort had made a great Slaughter of them, and the Arch-Bishop of Thoulouse interceded for those that surviv'd on Condition of their embracing the Roman Faith, they boldly refus'd, sending the Arch-Bishop Word, That they were the conquer'd Servants of Christ, whom the Beast, mention'd Rev. xiii. 7. should make War with and overcome; and from the Support they derived from this Prophecy, they freely sacrific'd their Lives to the Cause of Christ.

II. We may hence learn a just Abhorrence of a Spirit of Persecution, and the Vanity of the Pretences us'd to cover or palliate it.

We are sure nothing is more opposite to the merciful Genius of the Christian Institution, or the Spirit of its blessed Author. Christ's Kingdom is a Kingdom of Light; and Men are to be drawn into it by the Evidence of divine Truth propos'd to their Understandings, and by the Bands of a Man, even by the Cords of Love. Christ's People are to be a willing People in the Day of his Power, captivated by the sweet and sovereign Efficacy of his Grace, not drag'd to his Altars against their own Consent, or forc'd into his Service by Violence and savage Cruelty. 'Tis the Devil's Kingdom of Darkness that requires to be propagated by Force and Blood. 'Tis his Cause that must be supported by Lying and Murder. 'Tis the Character of the Beast to cause those that worship not his Image to be killed, and to forbid all to buy or sell that have not his Mark and Stamp upon them, Rev. xiii. 15, 16, 17. It belongs to Antichrist to employ Dragoons for Missionaries, to convince Men's Understandings by Racks and Wheels, and to proselyte them to his Cause by the Terror of military Execution. Our Lord allows not his Disciples to call down for Fire from Heaven against those that refuse to receive him; much less to fetch Fire from Hell to consume and devour them.

And therefore no Pretence of Heresy will ever justify such Acts of Violence and Inhumanity, such Methods of Force and Compulsion. And much less will a blind and unrighteous Charge of Heresy be any Apology for those that persecute the sincere Professors of the uncorrupted Gospel of our blessed Saviour. The like Pretences neither clear'd those that murdered the Prophets of old, nor those that shed the Blood of Christ, and of his faithful Followers; and much less will it vindicate those that act the same Wickedness under a Christian Name, and pretend to propagate the Faith of Christ, with the Devil's Arms.

III. We may hence learn to commiserate those that are expos'd to the persecuting Rage of such Hypocrites.

And this is the Case of the Protestants in France, and particularly of our Brethren in the Cevennes. And sure what I have already represented should recom-

mend them to our Pity and our Prayers. Their Declaration is a noble Defence of their Cause, and sufficient to justify the Innocence of their Conduct to all impartial Judges. Let us then commend their Cause to the great God, and themselves to his merciful Protection and Defence. Though the ten Kings (we are told) should give their Power to the Beast, and for a long Time the Saints should be overcome, yet we are assur'd the Lamb should overcome them at last by his faithful and chosen ones, Rev. xvii. 14. And even those Kings that had so long tamely put their Necks under the Papal Yoke, should at last shake it off, See. v. 16. How far God may honour these oppressed Servants of his (how despicable soever in human Appearance) to accomplish his own just and gracious Purposes, is what we can neither foresee or determine. But we have Reason to sympathize with them in their Sufferings and Dangers, and to implore an happy Issue of their necessary Attempts of Self-preservation.

IV. We may hence encourage our Faith in all the Predictions of Scripture, concerning the Downfall of mystical Babylon.

We see the Guilt of Persecution and Blood, impenitently persisted in, will draw down destructive Vengeance at last. There is a Time when God will judge that great Whore that hath corrupted the Earth with her Fornication, and will avenge the Blood of his Servants at her Hand; when Heaven and the holy Apostles and Prophets shall rejoice over her, and applaud the true and righteous Judgments of God in her final Ruin. May we therefore exercise the Faith and Patience of the Saints in waiting for the fulfilling of divine Predictions. I can never think that the Papal Hierarchy will long escape the destructive Judgments of God, after all they have done towards filling up the Measure of their Guilt. And when that is once full, the Vials of divine Wrath will soon be pour'd out. Mystical Babylon is represented as fearless and secure when her final Overthrow was just coming upon her. And therefore our Faith should not be stagger'd at the continued Prosperity of Rome Papal, which will be no Protection to her, when the Time of her Vengeance is come, when her Sins have reach'd up to the Heavens, and God shall remember her Iniquities. And when she saith, I sit as a Queen, and am no Widow, and shall see no Sorrow; then shall her Plagues come in one Day, Death, and Mourning, and Famine, And she shall be utterly burnt with Fire. For strong is the Lord God that judgeth her, Rev. xviii. 5, 7, 8.

V. We may hence be excited to adore the singular Goodness of God that has so long preserv'd us from the persecuting Cruelty of such Hypocrites as these.

'Twas owing to the marvellous Interposal of his gracious Providence that any Bounds were set to the raging Waves that had overflown the rest of this Kingdom; and that a few Protestants were preserv'd in this City as the Seed of a more numerous Race. 'Twas the Mercy of God that they were not given as a Prey to the Teeth of our Enemies, but escap'd as a Bird out of the Fowler's Snare, Psal. cxxiv. 6, 7. Nor should we be insensible of the great Dangers we have since been deliver'd from. The Remembrance of our once dismal Prospect and awful Fears, should affect us with the Contemplation of our marvellous Deliverance, with which we were mercifully surpriz'd, when our Enemies Hopes were so high, and we even at the Brink of Despair. And to that Deliverance we owe it, that we our selves have only heard of Papal Cruelties without feeling 'em; that we see not those Flames kindled again in which so many of our Ancestors were offer'd up as a Sacrifice to Papal Fury; that we are not encompass'd with Missionaries and Dragoons sent to convert us to the Romish Faith, nor deliver'd into the Hands of brutish Men skilful to destroy. O may our Gratitude and Praise be answerable to the distinguishing Mercy of God in his Dealings with us while this has been the sad Lot of our Brethren elsewhere! May we express that Gratitude by a diligent Improvement of that reformed Religion which we enjoy so free a Pro-

Profession of! May these Churches of ours that enjoy that external Rest, walk in the Fear of the Lord, and Comforts of his Holy Spirit, in order to their being edify'd and multiply'd! and then we may hope that our Prayers

may prevail, not only for the continued Protection of God over our selves, but for the Revival of his oppressed Cause and Interest in the World.

S E R M O N III.

Preach'd at Dublin on the 23d of February, 170⁶.

I Cor. iii. 16, 17.

16. Know ye not that ye are the Temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you.

17. If any Man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy. For the Temple of God is holy, which Temple ye are.

HERE is no need to detain you from the Consideration of the Words themselves by any Explication of the Context. The Apostle Paul does in them propose an important Truth to us, which he supposes every sincere Christian would at the first View assent to and own, viz. That he is a living Temple unto God, thro' the (stated) Inhabitation of his Holy Spirit. From whence he takes occasion to caution them against doing any thing that might defile God's holy Temple, and thereby expose us to his destructive Vengeance.

I shall therefore from the Words chiefly insist on the Truth here asserted in the Doctrinal Part, and on the Caution subjoin'd as one Branch of the Application.

The important Truth which I would explain is,
That every true Christian is the Temple of God.

In order to the Illustration of this excellent Truth, I shall briefly consider,

I. What is here pre-suppos'd in this Assertion of the Apostle, viz. That every true Christian is the Temple of God.

II. What is more directly imply'd and included in it; or, in what Sense and on what Accounts a true Christian is said to be God's Temple.

And then I shall apply the whole. And,

I. Let us consider what is here pre-suppos'd in this Assertion of the Apostle, That every true Christian is the living Temple of God.

Now this Assertion pre-supposes such necessary Truths as these.

1. That there is a God that made us, to whom all Worship and Homage is due from his reasonable Creatures.

The very Notion of a Temple supposes a Deity, to whose Service and Use 'tis dedicated, and who is to be worshiped in it. Our being a Spiritual Temple to God does therefore pre-suppose, That there is such a necessary and infinitely perfect Being, who is the Maker, the Owner, the Ruler, and Benefactor of this World, and of all those reasonable Creatures that are the Inhabitants of it; from whom we in particular have deriv'd our Being and Life, and to whom therefore we owe the highest Veneration and Respect, the utmost Obedience and Service, both on the Account of his adorable Perfections, and of his supreme Authority and Dominion. Were there no such all-perfect Being, or were we under no such Dependence on him, and Obligations to him for our Being, and for all that we have, and are, and hope for, there were no Occasion for such a thing as the Erection of a Temple, and for the Devotion that should be paid to him there.

2. This Assertion further supposes, That this blessed God is both capable and willing to maintain a gracious Intercourse with us as his sincere Worshipers.

It supposes that he is possess'd of those adorable Perfections that render him capable of such Converse

with us. Such as his Immensity and Omnipresence on the account whereof he is not far from any of us, since in him we live and move and have our Being, Acts xvii. 27, 28. Nay, he is as near to us as we are to our selves, so that we may every where lift up holy Hands to him, and are every where sure of his essential Presence with us, and consequently of his Capacity to maintain a gracious Intercourse and Communion with us.

Again, His Omniscience assures us, That he who is every where present with us does always behold us where-ever we are, and whatever we do, and consequently takes notice of all the Homage and Service we present to him; nay, this Perfection assures us, That he not only observes our external Acts of Devotion, but that he even penetrates into our Hearts, and inspects all those hidden Motions of our Souls, those internal Acts of Reverence, of Love, of Faith, &c. which are the Life and Soul of all religious Worship.

Again, His All-sufficiency assures us, That as he does behold, so he can liberally recompense all our sincere Devotions and Services. So that we have all possible Encouragement to pay this Tribute of our Homage and Devotion to him, as a Being in whose Power it is to make us truly happy, and to establish an inseparable Connexion between our Duty and our everlasting Interest.

Nay, 'tis suppos'd that his infinite Goodness and Mercy inclines him to entertain such a favourable Commerce with us, to accept our sincere Homage and Worship, to hear our Prayers, and give merciful Answers to them; to receive our grateful Acknowledgments, to regard our upright Services with a favourable Eye, and to pour down his Blessings upon us with a bountiful Hand. So that we may come to him with a fixed Persuasion, That he is, and that he is the Rewarder of all those that diligently seek him, Heb. xi. 6.

Were he not a God thus able and thus inclin'd to take notice of and observe, to accept and reward our unfeigned Devotions and Homage, there were no Encouragement to erect a Temple for, and to present our religious Addresses to him.

3. This Assertion, That every true Christian is the Temple of God, does pre-suppose, That 'tis by divine Grace that we are restor'd to this Dignity and Privilege.

'Tis indeed true, that Man was in his original Constitution design'd to be the Temple of God. He was actually so in his State of Innocence. He is so now by the Right and Obligation he is under to dedicate himself to God's special Service.

But 'tis no less true, that Man in his corrupt and degenerate State is now miserably indispos'd for that religious Intercourse that he should maintain with God. All things in this once beautiful Temple of God are now woefully defac'd. Those clear Notices and Discoveries of divine Truth which were once as the Lamps of that

sacred Place, are now in a great Measure extinguish'd. So that the depraved Understanding of Man looks rather like a *Dungeon* for *Darkness* than a *Temple* for *Light*. Those *Laws* of God that were once written on the fleshly *Tables* of Man's Heart are now in a great Measure defac'd, and 'tis but a few broken *Fragments* that remain. That *Heart* that was once God's *Altar*, from whence spiritual *Oblations* were wont to ascend in the *Flames* of Love, is now wretchedly defil'd by being consecrated to despicable *Idols*. That *Incense* of devout *Affections* that was wont to mount up to Heaven, is now prostituted to vile and contemptible *Objects*. Those *Souls* in which the *Beauties* of *Holiness* once shone (I mean those *Graces* that constitute the moral Image of God) are now become a *Cage* of abominable *Impurities* and brutish *Lusts*. There is now by Nature no inward Propension of Soul to honour and reverence him, to love him and delight in him, to believe and trust him, to obey and serve him, to resemble and to enjoy him. There is on the contrary an affected and wilful *Alienation* and *Estrangement* from him. 'Tis the perverse Language of our *Hearts* to him, *Depart from us, for we desire not the Knowledge of thy Ways; what is the Almighty that we should serve him, and what Profit should we have if we pray unto him?* Job xxi. 14, 15. And thro' this wretched Disinclination of our Nature to Communion with God, this Temple of his in every unconverted, unrenewed Sinner, being thus desolate and waste, nay, polluted and profan'd, is in a great measure justly forsaken by him. Such impure and defiled *Souls* and *Bodies* are no fit *Habitation* for an holy God to dwell in, nor can present to him any such *Worship* and *Homage* as he will accept. And therefore all vital delightful Communion between God and them is wofully intercepted and lost. They are unmeet for his special Presence, his peculiar Favour, and the special distinguishing Fruits thereof.

But yet the blessed God has in his infinite Mercy form'd the wise and gracious Design of repairing the Ruins of this Temple of his, and of restoring Man to this excellent Use and this singular Honour of being again the living Temple of God.

It was for that End that the eternal Word was made *Flesh*, and tabernacled among us. He became the glorious *Emmanuel*, God with us, God manifested in our *Flesh*. And this ineffable *Inhabitation* of the eternal Word in our Nature, was the highest Assurance that could be given us of God's merciful Design to restore us to that Communion with himself which we had lost, and once more to dwell with the Sons of Men. Nay, this blessed *Emmanuel* did therefore become our atoning Sacrifice, that by a full Expiation of our Guilt he might render it consistent with the Honour of that God whose Justice we had so highly injur'd and provok'd, to restore us to his Favour, and to the Privileges of a gracious Intercourse with himself. And that humane Nature he thus assum'd is thro' the glorious *Inhabitation* of the Deity become as it were an *Original Temple*, and a *Pattern* to which we must be conform'd by becoming our selves an holy Temple to God. And 'tis for this End that he has the Spirit without measure, that by the Communication of its renewing and sanctifying Influences, he may new-mould and form our *Souls* and *Bodies*, and prepare them for the Uses and Service of such a *Spiritual Temple*. And therefore, 'tis only such as are by Faith vitally united to Christ, and made Partakers of his regenerating sanctifying Spirit that are actually the holy Temples of God. In being made such, *We are the Workmanship of God; we are his Building*. And 'tis to his divine Art and Power we must ascribe it that we are now made such an holy *Habitation* to himself.

But this leads me,

II. To consider, what is more directly imply'd and included in our being the Temples of God, or how and on what Accounts we become the Temples of God?

Answer, We must here speak of these spiritual in some Allusion to material Temples.

Now in order to a material House or Building becoming the Temple of God, it was requisite, That it should be solemnly dedicated to his Worship and special Service; that he should condescend to dwell in it; that his solemn Worship should be celebrated there; and that nothing should be admitted into it that might profane or defile it.

Now to every true Christians becoming the spiritual Temple of God, there must be a Concurrence of what is parallel to these Requisites of a material Temple. As,

1. We become the spiritual Temples of God by a solemn Consecration of our selves to his special Service and Use.

Solomon's Temple you know was solemnly dedicated to God, 1 Kings viii. And it was this Separation to this peculiar and sacred Use that distinguish'd a Temple from any other Building.

So must we become the spiritual Temples of God by freely and entirely devoting our Bodies and Souls (which are his) to glorify him. We must dedicate our Understandings to contemplate, to admire, and adore him; our Wills to choose him and cleave unto him; our Affections to love him and delight in him; our Hearts to enthrone him; our Tongues to publish his Truths and celebrate his Praises; our Eyes to read, and our Ears to hear his holy Word; our Bodies to bow before him. All our Faculties and Powers to conspire in paying that reverential Homage and Worship that is infinitely due unto him. 'Tis such an unreserved and voluntary Self-dedication to him that must invite him to accept of us for his Temples, and to make his peculiar Abode and Residence with us.

2. We become the spiritual Temples of God, by his condescending to dwell with us, and to take up his special Abode in us.

Thus the Building erected by Solomon became the Temple of God, when upon his Dedication of it to his Service, the blessed God vouchsaf'd as it were to come down and to dwell there. And accordingly, that Cloud of Glory in which the blessed God appear'd there, was the sensible Mark and Symbol of his special Presence. He own'd it as his Temple when he thus fill'd it with his Glory. And that sensible Glory was therefore call'd the *Shechinah*, or God's *Habitation* and Presence.

Now tho' there be no such sensible Glory as the Mark of God's Presence in every true Christian, yet there is something more valuable, I mean, *The Spirit of God*, who takes up his Abode in them, and by his stated and constant Operations carries on the great Work of their Sanctification, conforming them more and more to the Nature of that blessed God they adore, exciting all filial Affections towards him in their Hearts, and disposing them for a constant and delightful Communion with him. And God's thus sending his Spirit into our Hearts to reside and dwell there for ever, is as certain a Sign that he accepts the Dedication we make of them to him as his living Temples, as God's filling the House that Solomon built with his Glory, was a certain Evidence that he accepted the Consecration he made of it to be his material Temple.

And this is plainly intimated to us in the Text, for when the Apostles had asserted, *That we are the Temples of God*, he adds by way of Illustration and Proof, *That the Spirit of God dwells in us*. And elsewhere we are said to be an *Habitation of God thro' the Spirit*, Eph. ii. 22. Now tho' these Expressions may import, That 'tis the great Work of the Spirit in our Regeneration to frame and fashion us for the special Service of God, to furnish us with those Principles of divine Light and Life, and Love, that render us capable of vital Communion with him; yet their more direct Intent and Meaning is to acquaint us, That the continued and abiding Operations of that Holy Spirit in order to our progressive Sanctification are the sure Testimony and Mark of God's special Presence in us. And therefore you may observe, That the Promise which our Saviour makes to those that love him and keep his Words, viz. *That the Father will love them, and the Father and he will come*

come to them, and take up his Abode with them, (at John xiv. 23.) plainly refers to the foregoing Promise of giving his holy Spirit to his Disciples that he may abide with them for ever, ver. 16.

3. We become the Temples of God by that mutual Communion and Intercourse that there is between him and us.

Material Temples were Places where God was supposed to meet and converse with Men. Thus when Solomon dedicated an House to God, as all their publick Sacrifices were to be offer'd there, so God on his part assur'd them, That he would put his Name there for ever, and his Heart and his Eyes should be there continually, 1 Kings viii. 3. He would there hear their Prayers, and accept their Oblations and Sacrifices, and impart his special Blessings to them.

In this Sense also, We are the Temples of God. As the Heart of a devout Christian is the Altar from whence the Sacrifices of Prayer and Praise do daily ascend to God in the Flames of Love; so may every upright Soul expect God's gracious Presence to hear and answer his fervent Supplications, to receive his thankful Tribute of Praise, and to accept all his spiritual Oblations, and to dispense all needful Benefits and Favours. The Soul of every true Christian is as it were consecrated Soil, where he may expect, that when-ever he draws near to God with the Tender of devout and filial Affections, God will draw nigh to him with the quickning Influences of his Holy Spirit, and with the reviving Manifestations of his peculiar Complacency and Love.

4. We become the Temples of God by maintaining that Purity and Holiness that becomes his special Presence.

The Temple of Solomon, in order to God's continued Abode therein was to be preserv'd from whatever was legally unclean. So that no Person or Thing was to be admitted into it, that was capable of profaning or defiling it. And hence the Jews that reckon'd the Gentiles as unclean, were so careful to forbid their Access into the second Court of the Temple where themselves were wont to offer their Sacrifices, for fear of polluting it. See the Accusation against Paul, Acts xxi. 28, 29, &c.

In this Sense must all true Christians be the Temple of God, by endeavouring to keep their Bodies and Souls pure and undefiled, and thereby fit Mansions for so pure and spotless a Majesty to take up his Abode in. And accordingly the Apostle enforces his Caution to the Corinthians against Fornication by this Argument, That their Bodies themselves were the Temples of the Holy Ghost, 1 Cor. vi. 18. And here in the Text the Apostle intimates, That the Temple of God must be holy, and therefore warns us, That we defile it not. No polluting Lust must be harbour'd or cherish'd in our Hearts, no allowed abominable Practice must stain our Conversation, if we expect that special Residence of God with us, which is the great Privilege of his spiritual Temples. None shall be admitted to the Honour and Happiness of such near Converse with him but those that are (in their sincere Desire and Endeavour) holy as he is holy. We must cleanse our Hands and purify our Hearts, if we would acceptably draw nigh to God, or expect his drawing nigh to us.

It now remains that we make some practical Improvement of this important Truth.

Are true Christians the spiritual Temples of God? Then,

I. We may hence infer, How great Folly 'tis to confine either the essential or special Presence of God to a material Temple.

It argues gross Ignorance to confine the essential Presence of God to a material Temple.

This Folly many of the Heathens run into for want of right Apprehensions of that glorious Perfection of the divine Nature, his Immensity and Omnipresence. And 'tis in opposition to those mistaken Notions, that the Apostle tells the Men of Athens, That God dwells not in Temples made with Hands. Since in him We all live, and move, and have our Being, Acts xvii. 24. And Solomon in his Prayer at the Dedication of the Temple guards

the Israelites against that dangerous Mistake, But will God indeed (saith he) dwell on the Earth? Behold the Heaven, and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain thee; How much less this House which I have built? 1 Kings viii. 27.

Nor must we confine the special and gracious Presence of God to any material Temple.

There was indeed under the Law a sensible Glory as the Mark of the divine Presence that was confin'd to the Tabernacle and to the Temple; and therefore there alone their publick Sacrifices were to be brought. But this was by no means exclusive of God's special and gracious Presence with every upright Soul. So much God himself intimates to the Jews who valued themselves so much on their material Temple. Thus saith the Lord, The Heaven is my Throne, and the Earth is my Footstool, Where is the House that ye build unto me? And where is the Place of my Rest? For all those things hath my Hand made, and all those things have been, saith the Lord. But to this Man will I look, even to him that is of a poor and contrite Spirit, and that trembles at my Word, Isa. lxvi. 12. This Mansion he prefers before all the magnificent Structures that human Art can at the greatest Expence rear unto him. Nay, whereas the highest Heaven is a Temple incomparably transcending all earthly ones in Glory, yet that high and lofty one that inhabits Eternity, and dwells in the high and holy Place, disdains not to dwell with him that is of an humble and contrite Spirit, to revive the Spirit of the Humble, and the Heart of the contrite ones, Isa. lvii. 15. And if God's special Presence under the Law was not confin'd to a material Temple, 'tis much less so under the Gospel. As our Saviour intimates to the Woman of Samaria, when he tells her, That neither at this Mountain nor yet at Jerusalem they should worship the Father. Under the Gospel, the Worship of God (even his publick Worship) is as unconfin'd as the glorious Object of it. There is no Virtue in any one Place more than another to recommend our Devotions to God. There is indeed a special Presence and Blessing promis'd to worshipping Societies, but not limited to any particular Places. We may indeed set apart convenient Places for publick Worship, but must by no means think the divine Presence confin'd to them. 'Tis true Christians alone that are now in the truest Sense the Temples of God, 'Tis consecrated Soil where-ever they lift up holy Hands to him. They need go no farther than their own Hearts to meet and converse with God.

II. We may hence infer the marvellous Condescension of God that makes such sinful Creatures as we are his Living Temples.

What are these Souls of ours to which so manifold Remains of Impurity cleave, that the blessed God should choose them for his Residence! What are our poor and defective Services that he should look on them with a favourable Eye! That he should accept and reward them! Has that high and lofty one that inhabits Eternity, the high and holy Place for his Residence, and will he yet dwell in so mean an Abode as that of an humble and contrite Soul? What Reason have we to magnify and adore that Goodness of his that stoops so low! Well may we say with the Centurion, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst come under the Roof of my House! Mat. viii. 8.

III. We may infer the Dignity of every true Christian, that he is a living Temple of God.

How glorious and happy are those Souls whom he honours with his special Residence and Abode! Who would not covet his Presence, and be ambitious to entertain so glorious an Inhabitant and Guest! For where the blessed God makes a Soul his peculiar Habitation and Mansion of his Abode, he dwells in it by the stated Operations of his holy Spirit; he replenishes it with Beams of divine Light; he stamps his own amiable Image there; he refreshes it with his Consolations and Joys; he admits it to that Freedom and Communion with himself, which is both unspeakably delightful and beneficial. He gives them to experience what

what that great and precious Promise contains, *I will dwell with them, and walk in them, and be their God,* 2 Cor. vi. 16.

IV. I may hence urge all of you to become the Temples of God.

There are two grand Competitors for our Souls, Satan and God. If God have not got the Possession, Satan keeps it. And, O how dreadful is their Case, who are under the Power of the Prince of the Air, the Spirit that rules in the Children of Disobedience! Eph. ii. 2. We cannot look without Pity on those of whose Bodies infernal Spirits have the Possession. But their Case is far more deplorable, whose Souls are under his Dominion and Conduct. Such Souls are indeed (as 'tis said of mystical Babylon) the Habitation of Devils, and the Hold of every foul Spirit, and the Cage of every unclean and hateful Bird, Rev. xviii. 2. And indeed, where those Souls that should be the Temples of God are forsaken by him, 'tis no Wonder that those impure Spirits should gain and keep the undisturbed Possession of them.

If we would not have this to be our deplorable Case,

Let us sincerely dedicate our selves to God. Let us consecrate our Souls and Bodies to his special and perpetual Service. Let us freely give up our selves to his Possession and Use for ever. Let us set our selves apart from all common or impure Use to be holy to him.

Let us beg his renewing Spirit to cleanse and purify our Nature, and to prepare us to become an holy Habitation and Abode to him. Let us implore his sanctifying Grace to enlighten our Minds, to rectify our Inclinations, to spiritualize and elevate our Affections, to banish every hateful Iniquity, every defiling Lust, every irregular Passion, that might so pollute our Souls as to render them too noysom an Abode for him to dwell in, and might provoke him to retire and withdraw from them.

V. Let us carry it as becomes those that are the Temples of God.

As particularly,

1. Let us value his gracious Presence and Communion.

Let us esteem it our highest Honour that so glorious a Majesty will make so mean a Place as our defiled Hearts his Habitation. Let us earnestly aspire to more intimate Intercourse with him. Let us breathe after brighter Discoveries of his amiable Glory, fuller Communications of his quickning transforming Grace, and more ravishing Manifestations of his Favour and Love. Let us aspire to that Nearness and Intimacy of Communion with him, and the ravishing Delights resulting thence, which he is wont to admit prepared Souls unto. Let us be deeply sensible, How good it is for us to draw nigh to him, Psal. lxxiii. ult.

2. Let God receive a daily Tribute of Homage and Service from us.

Where should the Incense of Prayer daily ascend to God, but from the Altar of a devout Heart? Where should God's Praises daily resound? Where should these spiritual Sacrifices be daily presented to him, but in his spiritual Temple? Where should the Fire of true

Devotion be kept continually burning but there? Frequent and lively Contemplations of the Glory of God shining in his Works and Word, the ardent Breathings of inflamed Affections towards him; the warm Aspirations of our Souls towards him on the Wings of Faith and Hope, are Exercises highly becoming those whom he chooses to be an holy Temple and Habitation to himself.

3. Let us beware of defiling this spiritual Temple of God.

The Profanation of a material Temple was reckon'd a great Sin under the Law. They reckon'd a peculiar Reverence due to the Place where God so sensibly manifested his Glory. It was a Caution often given to the Israelites, that they should reverence the Sanctuary of God; and keep their Foot when they went to his House, Lev. xix. 30. Eccl. v. 1.

And our blessed Saviour whip'd the Buyers and Sellers out of the Temple, for turning God's House of Prayer into an House of Merchandize.

My Brethren, God's spiritual Temples are more valuable Things in his Eye than any material ones; and he is as truly concern'd that the Former should be kept free from any allowed moral Impurity, as that the Latter should be kept free from any ceremonial Defilement. And therefore the Apostle speaking of these spiritual Temples, saith, i. e. That if any Man defile them, him will God destroy.

Hast thou dedicated thy Soul to God for his special Residence and Abode? He will resent and punish it as an heinous Indignity offer'd to him, if thou sufferest any such abominable polluting thing as Malice and Envy, Hatred and Revenge, exorbitant Passion, or Pride to be harbour'd there.

Hast thou dedicated thy Body to be part of God's Temple, he will resent it as a grievous Provocation, if thou defilest his Temple by nauseous Intemperance and Excess, by brutish Uncleaness and Lust. For that is in Effect to banish him out of thy Soul, by rendring it unsuitable for the Presence and Converse of so infinitely pure and holy a Being. While we with Sampson sleep on the Lap of Dalilah, we may soon expect as he to find to our Shame and Sorrow, that God is departed from us. Spirituality and Purity in our Thoughts and Desires, Integrity and Sincerity in our Aims and Intentions for the Glory of God, and the Good of others, and a Godlike heavenly Temper of Mind, will invite an infinitely gracious God to bless those Souls with his special Presence, and his gracious Communications and Influences which we have consecrated to him.

VI. Are all true Christians the Temples of God? This suggests one Argument to your Charity towards them.

We reckon it an Instance of Piety and Zeal to repair those material Temples which are set a-part for the Worship of God. Sure 'tis not a lesser, but greater Instance of it to support and relieve those Bodies of necessitous Saints, that are the living Temples of the Holy Ghost. It would be as inexcusable to suffer the Latter as the Former, to fall into Ruins and Decay, for want of our reasonable Liberality to uphold them.

S E R-

S E R M O N I V.

P R E A C H ' D

To an AUDITORY of YOUNG PERSONS, Jan. 1st, 170⁵.

Mark x. 21, 22.

21. *Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest, go thy way, sell what thou hast, and give to the Poor, and thou shalt have Treasure in Heaven, and come, and take up the Cross, and follow me.*
22. *And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; For he had great Possessions.*

WHAT we may know of whom these Words of our Lord are spoken, (and how applicable they are to an Auditory of young Persons) we must look back as far as the 17th Verse, where we read, that when Jesus came forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeling to him, ask'd him, *Good Master, What shall I do that I may inherit eternal Life?* Concerning this Person (if we compare this Account with what the Evangelists Matthew and Luke give of the same Passage), we may observe these two Things remarkable in him, viz. That as to his Age he was but a young Man. And 'tis not very usual to hear from Persons of that Age, such a serious Enquiry as this about the way to eternal Life. To such the vain Amusements and Pleasures of this World are so suitable to the Gaiety of their Humour, and to the Vanity of their unexperienc'd Minds, that 'tis very rare for them to entertain any solicitous anxious Thoughts about the important Concerns of another. Again, as to his Station, he was a Ruler, Luke xviii. 18. One who, tho' Young, was in some publick Post and Office that rendred him somewhat considerable in the World; so that in his Circumstances we find the usual Conjunction of secular Wealth and Honour. We see then, that his desirable Condition and Circumstances in the World as well as his Age, carry'd with them a strong Temptation to the immoderate Love of this Life, and the Neglect of a Better. And yet, even this rich young Ruler was so far from being unthoughtful about his precious Soul, and the momentous Interests of the Life to come, that we see him applying himself to our blessed Saviour, for his Instructions in reference to them, with great Marks of seeming Zeal and Devotion. He ran to him, as glad of such an happy Opportunity of conversing with him on that great Subject, and hearing from his own Mouth the Words of eternal Life, (which 'tis probable that he had heard from others to be the chief Subject of our Saviour's Preaching). He kneel'd down to him, to express the Veneration he had for so eminent a Teacher as he took him to be. And to insinuate into our Lord's Esteem and Affections, and to oblige him to give a more full and free Answer to the Question he had to propose, he gives him the Title commonly us'd to their celebrated Rabbi's, or Doctors of their Law; *Good Master*. And then he puts the Question it self, which he so earnestly desir'd his Resolution of, *What shall I do that I may inherit eternal Life?*

Our blessed Saviour in his Answer first takes Notice of the Title he had given him, and then speaks more directly to the Question he propos'd. For the Title of Good, our Lord tells him it did primarily belong to God alone. Partly, That he might hereby discountenance that proud Affectation of swelling Titles, which the Jewish Doctors were so prone to, and on the contrary, shew a Pattern of Humility; and partly, that he might lead him to the Contemplation of divine Goodness, as the true Spring of eternal Life, and of that sanctifying Grace that must prepare us for it.

For the Question it self, he directs him to the Commands of God, as pointing to us the true Way to eternal Life. Thou knowest the Commands, Do not commit Adultery, &c. Or as the Evangelist Matthew has it, *If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Commands*. I see no cogent Reason for supposing as many here do, that our Lord speaks to him in the Language of the Law of Innocence, or the Covenant of Works, which requir'd sinless Obedience as the Condition of eternal Life. It seems to me more natural and unstrain'd to understand his Words of that sincere Obedience to God's Commands, which is as truly the Way to eternal Life under the Covenant of Grace, as sinless Obedience was under the Law of Innocence. And 'tis observable, that our Lord in reciting the Commands, mentions only those of the second Table. Probably to instruct us, that that Holiness which must dispose us for eternal Life, does as truly include in it a Conformity to the Precepts of the second, as to those of the first Table. The great God laying as great a Stress on our Duty to our Neighbour, as on that we immediately owe to himself, and binding the Former upon us with the same solemn Sanction that he does the Latter.

Upon this Answer of our Lord the young Man replies with a forward Confidence, *Master, All these have I observed from my Youth*. No doubt he here spake according to the narrow and corrupt Gloss which the Jewish Doctors had put on the Moral Law, and thought he had sufficiently observ'd the Precepts thereof, by abstaining from the gross external Acts of Sin forbidden in the second Table. For had he understood the Spirituality and Perfection of the divine Law, (as reaching to his inward Thoughts and Inclinations) he wou'd have spoken in more modest Terms, and express'd an humbling Sense of those manifold Deviations from that perfect Rule of Righteousness, which even the sincere Observers of the Law of God are conscious of; nay, he wou'd have seen that he fell short of Integrity in his Obedience.

But

But upon this Answer of the young Man we read in my Text, *That Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest, go thy Way, &c.*

No doubt when 'tis said that our Saviour lov'd him, 'tis not to be understood of the same Love that he bare to his sincere Disciples who had forsaken all to follow him. But yet it does imply, that he saw something commendable and hopeful in him, which he thought fit so far to approve and encourage. And therefore that he might discover to him where his principal Defect lay, and how far short he was of that universal Holiness that is requisite in all that would be successful Candidates of eternal Life, he puts him to the Trial by this particular Command, *go and sell all that thou hast, &c. q. d.* If thou would'st indeed obtain eternal Life, immediately consent to abandon all for it, and forego thy earthly in hope of an heavenly Treasure, and come, take up thy Cross and follow me. And what the Issue was when he was put to this strict and severe Trial, the Text tells us, *he was sad at that Saying, and went away grieved, for he had great Possessions.*

What may be farther needful to clear the Sense and Scope of this excellent Passage will occur in speaking to these following Observations which I shall draw from it, and briefly speak to in their Order.

I. We may observe, That a solicitous Concern to obtain eternal Life, and serious Enquiry about the Way to it, is peculiarly commendable in young Persons, and to be greatly encouraged.

II. We may observe, That the Terms of obtaining eternal Life are the same to Young and Old, and particularly this is one of them, that we should be willing and ready, when ever we are call'd thereto, to part with all for it, to abandon every thing that stands in competition with it.

III. We may farther observe, that many who have some faint Desires of attaining eternal Life, may yet fall short of it, because they are not willing to come up to the Terms that are requir'd.

I begin with the

First Observation from the Words, *viz. That a solicitous Concern to obtain eternal Life, and a serious Enquiry about the Way to it, is peculiarly commendable in young Persons, and to be greatly encouraged.*

Before I consider this Observation it self, I would only make these two Remarks by the Way.

1. That the pious Jews did before our Saviour's Coming, entertain the Belief and Persuasion of eternal Life.

This is manifest from the Question which this young Ruler propounds. And with the like Question we find that a Jewish Lawyer accosts him in another Place, Luke x. And our Lord himself takes notice of it, when urging the Jews to search the Scriptures, he adds, *for in them ye think ye have eternal Life, and they are they which testify of me,* John v. 39. 'Tis true indeed the Covenant of Peculiarity made with that Nation as a collective Body, (which is usually call'd the Law) had only temporal Promises annex'd to the Observance of it. But the Promise made to Abraham long before the Delivery of the Law, did contain in it the true Blessedness of eternal Life, as that which through the promised Seed of Abraham should come upon all Nations. Nay, even the Faith of the Antideluvian Patriarchs whereby they believed, *that God was the Rewarder of all that diligently sought him,* Heb. xi. 6. rais'd them to the Expectation of an Happiness beyond the Bounds of Time, and to be enjoy'd in the Life to come. (See the Case of Enoch, ver. 5.) Much more did the Faith of the Hebrew Patriarchs enable them to look for a City that has Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God, and prompt them to seek for a better, even an heavenly Country, Heb. xi. 10, 16. The Faith of Moses did not only realize an invisible God to his view, but gave him a Prospect of an unseen Recompence of Reward, Heb. xi. 26, 27. Nay, this Faith enabled the Jewish Martyrs to endure the greatest Tortures, and to refuse offered Deliverance, by giving them the

Hope of obtaining a better Resurrection, ver. 35. Eternal Life was therefore as truly the great Object of the Faith of good Men under that obscurer Edition of the Covenant of Grace before the Coming of Christ, as 'tis of ours that enjoy the Gospel of Christ. There is only this Difference, that Life and Immortality are now brought into far clearer Light. The Promises of it are more express and full, the Author of it, the Way in which he merited and procur'd it, and that in which we must seek and obtain it, are far more clearly revealed.

2. We may here see the great Advantage of pious Education.

For to that we may most probably ascribe these good Dispositions that our Saviour found in this hopeful Youth, and was so pleas'd with. He had by his Parents been early instructed concerning that eternal Life which was the great Object of Faith to all that enjoy'd the Benefit of supernatural Revelation. They had taught him betimes the Commands of God, had endeavour'd to possess his Mind with a due Reverence for them, and to enure him betimes to the religious Observance of them. And accordingly we see some valuable Fruits of their good Education; he was under some serious Concern to obtain eternal Life; he was willing to be at some Pains for it; his Nature, tho' not sanctified, was greatly civiliz'd; his corrupt Inclinations, tho' not yet subdued, were under some considerable Restraint; and tho' he was yet a Stranger to the vital Power of Religion, yet he had a plausible Form of it, and seem'd inclin'd and dispos'd to attend to any farther Instructions concerning his Duty. And even such Fruits of pious Education are not to be altogether despis'd.

But to return from this Digression to the Observation it self.

A solicitous Concern to attain Eternal Life, and a serious Enquiry about the Way to it, is commendable in all, but especially in Young Persons.

1. 'Tis commendable in all.

For eternal Life is the noblest Object of the regular Ambition of an immortal Soul. For a Man to aspire to it, argues that he has some just Notions of the Vanity and Emptiness of this World, of the Shortness and Uncertainty of human Life, and of the vast Disproportion there is between Time and Eternity. It shews that he has some suitable Apprehensions of the Nature and Worth of his Soul, and of the endless Duration 'tis capable of and design'd for. Nay, if such a Candidate of eternal Life have right Conceptions of it, as a State of sinless Purity as well as unalloyed Happiness; if he rightly apprehend that perfect Blessedness it self to result from an entire Conformity to the Nature and Will of God, and from the full Enjoyment of him, then to aspire to it under that Notion, argues, that we do entertain some honourable Thoughts of God, and have at least some good, though faint and weak Desires towards him. And to be seriously inquisitive about the Way to eternal Life, is a good Evidence that we have such Convictions of the Excellency of it, that we are willing to be at some Pains and Labour to secure it.

And such a solicitous Concern for attaining eternal Life, such a serious Enquiry about the Way to it, is a good preparatory Disposition, and the first Step towards it. This opens our Ears to divine Instructions. This renders us attentive to the Word of God, the great Design whereof is to reveal that unconceivable State of endless Glory and Felicity, and to call us to the vigorous Prosecution of it, and to direct our Feet into the strait Gate and narrow Paths of eternal Life. This tends to enhance our Esteem of that blessed Saviour that has the Words of eternal Life, and of that Gospel that brings Life and Immortality to light, and of those faithful Dispensers of it who come to shew us the Way of Salvation, John vi. 68. 2 Tim. i. 10. Acts xvi. 17. This tends to give their divine Message a due Authority and Weight upon our Consciences, and disposes

us to give it a welcome Entertainment. This greatly prepares us to embrace such a divine Revelation, as gives us both a clearer Discovery of the *Nature* and *Duration* of a future State of Happiness, and fuller Assurance of the undoubted *Certainty* of it, and plain-er Instructions concerning the *Terms* on which it may be obtain'd. So that there is a happy Step gain'd towards a Man's Conversion, when once he is brought thus far to be desirous of eternal Life, and inquisitive how he may attain it.

And methinks this Question carries something more in it, than for a Man barely to enquire, under some present Terrors of Conscience, how he shall be *saved from the Wrath to come*, and escape that everlasting Vengeance his Sins have deserv'd? That Question may spring from a meer servile Dread of Justice. Whereas this Question in the Text, *What shall I do to inherit eternal Life?* springs rather from more ingenuous Thoughts of the *Goodness* of God, as the liberal Rewarder of all that diligently seek him.

2. But if such a solicitous Concern to attain eternal Life, and such a serious Enquiry about the Way to it, be commendable in all, 'tis much more so in those that are young.

And the Reason of that is obvious, *viz.* Because they are under the strongest Temptations to neglect and postpone the serious Thoughts of it.

For those that are young, they are but just entered on the World, and are apt to imagine that they have many Years yet before them. They are ready to promise to themselves the ordinary Extent and Date of human Life, and perhaps according to that they have 40, or 50, or 60 Years in their Prospect. And this strongly tempts them to think they may safely adjourn the Thoughts of another World, and of all Preparation of it for many Years yet to come. Besides they are apt to judge, that such serious and solemn Thoughts of a *Life to come* are too grave for their Age, and will be more seasonable for a *Sick-bed*, or when *Grey-hairs*, and the Infirmities of Age come upon them. They are now in the Prime of their Youth; their Senses are vigorous and quick, and capable to relish the Pleasures of this animal Life. This World now appears to them in its most amiable Dress, and that inveigling *Harlot* displays all its attractive *Charms* before their Eyes. And when their own desirable and plentiful Circumstances in the World give them a fair Prospect of all sensual Satisfaction in the pleasing Enjoyments of it, the Temptation is strong to slight and disregard the Interests of eternal Life, that are both future and unseen. And therefore 'tis the more commendable to see such as are furrounded with all the enticing Delights of this Life, to be yet solicitous about the Concerns of Life eternal; to see such as are but entering on the Stage of this Earth to set their Faces towards Heaven; to behold those whose Vanity might rather prompt them to aspire to secular Honours and Preferments, seeking to enter into the Kingdom of God, and lifting themselves as the Candidates of Honour, Glory, and Immortality: To hear from them such serious Enquiries about the Way to eternal Life, from whom we might rather expect to hear of some busy Projects, how they may become *rich* or *great* in the World, how they may spend their Days in sensual Jollity and Mirth; to discern in such young Persons as these, such a serious Solitude about their Souls, and their eternal Welfare, is very surprizing and affecting, and cannot but raise in us some comfortable Expectations concerning them. Such an hopeful and promising Temper is to be greatly commended and encouraged; and no Wonder then that it did in some Measure attract the Eye and Heart of our blessed Saviour; no Wonder that when he beheld the towardly Disposition of this young Ruler that he *loved him*.

Besides, such young Persons seem to express a higher Value for eternal Life, when they so early enquire the Way to it. 'Tis no such Wonder to see those so-

licitous about it, that have found by long Experience the Vanity of this World, and whose Hopes from it have been miserably disappointed. Much less is it any Wonder to see dying Persons desirous of Heaven, when the World has left them, and Heaven appears to them as the only Refuge from Hell. They may in that Case be just willing to go to Heaven, as a Man condemned to the *Gibbet* is rather willing to be transported. But for a Man to make Heaven his early Desire and first Choice argues an higher Esteem of it, and puts a greater Honour on the gracious Offer and Proposal of it.

Thus you see, how commendable 'tis in all, but especially in young Persons, to see them concern'd and solicitous about eternal Life, and inquisitive about the Way to it.

I now proceed to the

II. Observation from the Words, *viz.* That the Terms of obtaining eternal Life are the same to the Old and Young: And particularly, this is one of them, That we should be willing and ready whenever we are call'd thereunto, to part with all for it, to abandon every thing that stands in competition with it.

Now in order to the clearing the Truth of this Observation, and thereby the Scope of this important Passage, we must a little distinctly consider, in what Sense we must understand this young Ruler's Question, and then what was our Saviour's Design and Intent in the Answer he here gives to it.

First, As to the young Man's Question, it may admit of a twofold Sense and Construction.

For either the meaning of it may be, *What shall I do to merit and deserve eternal Life at the Hands of God? What shall I do, that may enable me to claim it as a Reward of Debt from his Justice? What Works shall I perform that may bear some Equality and Proportion to that Reward?*

Or else the meaning of it may only be, *What shall I do that I may attain that eternal Life which a merciful God has promis'd as a Reward of Grace? What shall I do in order to the securing my Interest in it, and becoming meet for the actual Possession of it?*

Secondly, We may accordingly hence determine what was our Saviour's Intent and Design in the Answer he here gives to the young Man's Question.

If we take the Question to be propos'd in the former Sense, as if the young Man had said, *What shall I do that will merit eternal Life, and enable me to claim it from the strict Justice of God, as a Reward of Debt?* Then indeed, We must conclude, it was the Intent of our Lord in his Answer to convince him of the Vanity of such Pretensions, by shewing him how far short he fell of the Perfection of the Law in his Obedience to it. And though our Lord might have shewn him this, in reference to the Duties of the second Table, which he pretended to have kept from his Youth, by discovering to him the Spirituality and Extent of them. (As he convinc'd the Lawyer of his Failure in reference to that comprehensive Summary of Second-Table-Duties, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*, by shewing him that every Man was his Neighbour, Luke x. 29, 30, &c.) But since our Lord knew that the Love of this World was the predominant or Master-Sin in the Heart of this young Man, he chooses rather to convince him of the utter Imperfection of his Obedience, by proposing such a Command to him as he easily foresaw would lay it most open to the View of his own Conscience. And to that end he requires him to *sell all he had, and to give it to the Poor, and to come and take up the Cross and follow him*. And indeed the Main of this Command was virtually contain'd in the first and great Command, of *loving the Lord our God with all our Heart and Soul, &c.* For that obliges us to prefer his Favour and his heavenly Reward above Life itself, and all the Comforts of Life, and to renounce them all when-ever he requires it. And this the young Man upon the Tryal soon found that his Heart could not yield unto. And such a Proof as this, of his failing in the Observance of the greatest

Command in the Law, was sufficient to convince him that it was in vain for him to claim *eternal Life* as a *Reward of Debt*, and that all proud Pretensions of *Merit* were to be for ever renounc'd. And it is both useful and proper frequently to set before Men the Perfection of the Law of God, to make them sensible that they must owe *eternal Life* not to their *Merits*, but to his *Mercy*, thro' a Mediator; not to the *Dignity* of their *Works*, but to his *gracious Promise*. They must receive it as the *Gift of God* through *Jesus Christ* our Lord, Rom. vi. ult.

But then, if on the other hand, we suppose the Meaning of the Question to be, *What shall I do that I may inherit eternal Life as a Reward of Grace? What shall I do, that I may secure my Interest in it, and become meet for the actual Possession of it?* Then we must suppose, that our Lord's Design and Scope in his Answer, is, to shew him, that *universal Holiness*, that *sincere Obedience* to all God's Commands, was necessary to our attaining *eternal Life*; and that his *Obedience* (notwithstanding the great Opinion he himself had of it) fell short of such *Sincerity*. And to convince him that it did so, he tries the Sincerity of his Obedience, by requiring one considerable Instance and Proof of it. God's Law requires us (as I observ'd before) *To love him with all our Heart and Soul, &c.* And consequently to prefer his Favour and his Reward before every thing in this World that stands in Competition with them. Now saith *Christ*, I'll try whether thou dost so, I'll put God and the World in Competition; Come, Give thy Goods to the Poor, and take the heavenly Treasure in lieu of them. Take up the Cross, and follow me thro' Sufferings and Persecutions to that heavenly Glory and Crown. If thou refusest this, 'tis evident, that thou lovest this World more than God, that Earth is dearer to thee than Heaven, and that thou wilt rather quit thy Hopes of eternal Life, than run the Hazard of temporal Sufferings for it.

And this I take to be the true Intent and Scope of our blessed Saviour's Answer.

But here it may be enquired if this was our Saviour's Intent, viz. To give this young Man proper Directions how to attain eternal Life, why does he not direct him to believe on himself as the Author of it? Why does he say, *If thou wilt enter into Life keep the Commands*; and elsewhere to the Lawyer that propounded the like Question, *Love the Lord thy God, &c.* And *love thy Neighbour as thy self, Do this* (i. e. sincerely) *and live.* Is this the Language of the Gospel?

To this I Answer,

That our Saviour's Answer is every way best adapted to the Capacity and present State of this young Querist.

To that Purpose, let it be consider'd,

1. That 'tis probable our Lord here design'd to strike at that pernicious practical Error so common among the Jewish Doctors, that a bare external Obedience to one, or at least to a few of the most important Commands of God, was sufficient for the Attainment of eternal Life.

Hence we read of their asking our Lord, *Which was the first and great Command?* Matt. xxii. 35. Matt. xii. 28. For this was a Question agitated among themselves, some preferring *Circumcision*, others the *Observation of the Sabbath*, others the *Law of Sacrifices*, others the *Observance of some Tradition of the Elders*. And hence our Saviour commends the discreet Answer of that Scribe, who fixt upon the *Love of God and his Neighbour* as the great Commands, and even preferable to *Burnt-Offerings* and *Sacrifices*. And then, that they thought a bare external Obedience to these Commands sufficient, is manifest from our Saviour's Sermon on the Mount, wherein he takes so much Pains to vindicate them from these narrow Glosses, and to explain the *Spirituality* of them. And on that Occasion declares to his own Disciples, That except their Righteousness (or Holiness) exceeded that of the

Scribes and Pharisees, they should not enter into the Kingdom of God; Matt. v. 20. It was therefore very congruous to the Wisdom of our Lord, first to root this dangerous Error out of their Minds, and to convince them of the Necessity of inward universal and sincere Holiness, in order to their Attainment of eternal Life. For this is a Truth of the last Necessity and highest Consequence, to be fix'd in the Minds of all that would be the successful Candidates of eternal Life.

2. It must also be consider'd, That our Lord does not exclude, tho' he do not here so clearly mention Faith in himself as the Author of eternal Life.

He supposes here, that this young Man did believe the Promises of the Old Testament, concerning that Seed of Abraham, in whom all Nations of the Earth should be blessed. Nay, he does here proceed so far as to require him to come to him, and lift himself in the Number of his Disciples and Followers, that he might from him be more fully instructed in the Words of eternal Life. And perhaps, this was as much as he was then capable to receive or bear. 'Tis manifest that the Disciples themselves had but dark Apprehensions of our Saviour's Mediation. They were so far from discerning, that he was to procure eternal Life for them by his Sufferings and Death, that they could not with Patience bear it, when he foretold them of his Death. And the very Sight of his Death, did for a while almost extinguish their Hopes of his promised Redemption, Luke xxiv. 21. When he told his Hearers of giving his Flesh for the Life of the World, and spake to them of eating his Flesh, and drinking his Blood, of believing in the Merit of his Passion to eternal Life, it seem'd to them an hard Saying, which they could not bear, and tempted many of them to go away from him. See John vi. 60, &c. No Wonder then, that our blessed Lord shou'd not to such raw and uninstructed Querists as this young Man, immediately propose this Doctrine concerning eternal Life as the Purchase of his Blood, to be believed and entertained, which his Disciples themselves had not yet fully learned. This would (as himself speaks in the like Case) have been to put new Wine into old Bottles, the Bottles would burst and the Wine be lost. Our blessed Lord therefore wisely reserv'd such clearer Instructions as these for a fitter Season, when those glorious Events of his Resurrection and Ascension, would expound the great Design and Efficacy of his Death, and shew the exact Accomplishment of what the Scriptures had foretold, both concerning his Sufferings, and the Glory that should follow.

But there remains one Question more to be consider'd, viz.

Whether what our Lord here requires of this young Man, contain such Terms of eternal Life as are common to all, or this Command be peculiar to him?

Ans. The Main of what our Lord enjoyns, contains such Terms of Salvation as are common to all.

All are required, in order to the Attainment of eternal Life, to prefer a Treasure in Heaven before all the Possessions of this Earth. All are enjoyn'd to deny themselves, and to take up their Cross and follow Christ, whenever he shall call them to pass thro' the Cross to the Crown, and thro' Sufferings into Glory. All are oblig'd so to value eternal Life as to renounce every thing, even temporal Life it self, when it stands in Opposition to it, or Competition with it. All are oblig'd so to value and esteem the blessed Author of it, as to be ready to sacrifice the dearest Interests of Life; nay, Life it self, when he commands them to his superior Interest, to his Glory and Service. These are Terms that all are required to submit to, who pretend to be Expectants of eternal Life.

But there seems to be one particular Precept peculiar to this young Man, viz. That of Selling all that he had and giving it to the Poor.

Some, I confess, have suppos'd, that τα πάντα does not here signify all he had, but all that he could well spare from his own just Occasions out of his great Possessions.

Possessions. And so they suppose, that our Lord here recommends no more to him than such a large Exercise of Liberality to the Poor, as was proportionable to his real Abilities. And upon that Supposition, there is nothing at all in our Lord's Command peculiar to him, but rather what is common with him to all that (as he) are rich in this World.

But if we understand the Words more strictly of all that he had, then indeed they are a Command peculiarly given to this young Man, to try his inward predominant Frame and Disposition. This Precept is not altogether unlike that of God to Abraham, when by the way of Tryal he commanded him to go and offer up his only Son Isaac: This being a very substantial Evidence and Proof how greatly he feared him. And so it was no way unbecoming the Wisdom of Christ, to try how far this young Man that seem'd so solicitous to attain eternal Life, did prefer it before all the Interests of this, by requiring him to part with all his present Possessions for an unseen heavenly Treasure.

Here is therefore no solid Foundation for the Popish Distinction of Councils and Commands. This being as real a Command to the young Men here, as that of sacrificing his Son was to Abraham. It was a Command accommodated to his particular Circumstances, and design'd for the Trial of his Temper and Disposition. And there was the greater need of this Trial now, because all the Disciples of Christ were like to meet with that Persecution that would set the World and Heaven in Competition.

I now proceed to the Third Observation from the Words, viz. That many who have some faint Desire of attaining eternal Life, may yet fall short of it, because they are not willing to come up to the Terms that are requir'd.

This was the Case of the young Man here. He had some Desires of eternal Life; he was willing to take some Pains for it; he yielded some external Obedience to God's Commands: But when this severe Command came that put it to the Tryal, whether God or Mammon, whether Heaven or Earth, whether the Love of this Life, or the Desire of Life eternal had the Ascendant in his Heart, he then soon discovered, that he valued his earthly Riches before the heavenly Treasure, and was not willing to part with his temporal Possessions for an eternal Inheritance. 'Tis said, that he was sad at that Saying, and went away griev'd, for he had great Possessions. Here was a manifest Struggle between his Conscience and his Inclination, between his love of this Life, and his desire of Life eternal. Gladly would he have compounded the Matter, and attain'd Heaven and Salvation on easier Terms. He was loth to quit his Hopes of eternal Life, but more loth to abandon the valuable Interests of this. He went away indeed, as unwilling to comply with Terms so contrary to the Grain of carnal self-Love, and of a worldly Mind and Heart. But he went away sorrowful, that eternal Life was set at too high a Price, and that his Hopes of it were like to be disappointed.

And this is really the Case with thousands of those that set up for Candidates of eternal Life. They would bid fair for it, if a few ineffectual Wishes, if a few cheap and easy Duties of Religion would entitle them to it. But if they must mortify their dearest Lusts, if they must cut off their right Hand, or pluck out a right Eye, if they must lay their All at the Foot of Christ, if they must consent to deny themselves, and take up their Cross and follow him; if they must consent to forego their most valuable Possessions on Earth (whenever call'd to it) in hopes of an heavenly Treasure, they are ready to say, as those in another Case, This is a hard Saying, and who can hear it? John vi. 60.—They are ready, like this young Man, to go away griev'd, that they cannot reconcile their heavenly Hopes with their sensual Lusts, or their worldly Interests.

It now remains, that we improve what has been said. And,

I. Let me hence urge all of you, but especially those that are Young, to be solicitously concern'd about attaining eternal Life, and inquisitive about the Way to it.

And truly I fear, that as to many of you, you have not gone so far as this young Ruler in my Text. Perhaps some of you there may be, that have squander'd away the greatest Part of your Life, and have never once entertain'd any serious Thoughts about the securing of Life eternal. And, O what Reason have you to reflect with Shame and bitter Anguish, that the main Part of your present Life is expir'd; and you have not begun to live to any valuable Purpose, nor have once propos'd any End or Design worthy of an immortal Soul to pursue! And, O what base Contempt is this of eternal Life! What an horrid Affront to the Grace of God that offers it! To the Son of God that purchas'd it! And what a stupid undervaluing of your own Souls, does so long an Unconcernedness about, and Neglect of eternal Life argue! And if you persist in it, how will you judge your selves thereby unworthy of everlasting Life, and quickly expose your selves to the Miseries of the second Death?

And for you that are Young, I may justly fear, that some of you have never yet consider'd the Nature and Worth of your precious Souls, and of the Importance of that eternal Life that the Gospel offers to your Acceptance and Choice. Some of you have never, perhaps, put this serious Question to your own Souls, and much less to others, to desire the Benefit of their Instruction, O what shall I do to inherit eternal Life? And 'tis to such of you that I would suggest a few Considerations to excite your early Concern about it.

1. You are now entering on the Business of Life, and it therefore now concerns you, to consider the only valuable End of it. It should be the earliest Enquiry of a reasonable Creature, What do I live for? What Design shall I pursue? For the fixing upon the right End of Life, will, in a great Measure, direct us to the proper Means of attaining it, and bring all our other Affairs into a regular Subordination to it. And can you think it the most valuable End of Life, to Eat and Drink, and Sport and Play? Can you think this the noblest Design that a reasonable Soul was made for, to cater for this mortal Body, and to provide for the Accommodations of this poor animal Life? Is thy Soul infus'd into this Clod of Earth, only to keep this corruptible Flesh from putrifying? Alas! If this were the highest End thy Soul was form'd for, the bitter Complaint and Expostulation of the Psalmist were highly reasonable, Wherefore hast thou made all Men in vain? Psal. lxxxix. 47.—But if thy Soul be indeed capable to know and adore, to obey and serve, to imitate and resemble the blessed God; if it be capable of, and intended for a perpetual Duration; if it have such an Happiness in its Offer and View, as results from a perfect Conformity to the blessed God, and full Enjoyment of him: Sure this, this is the noblest End thou canst propose; this is incomparably the most excellent Design that thou canst pursue. And not to make this thy chief Design, is, in Effect, to herd thy self with the Beasts that perish, instead of associating thy self with the highest Angels. 'Tis to live as if thou hadst more Alliance to Earth than to Heaven, and hadst more Regard to this Clod of Clay, than to the Breath of Life that animates it.

2. Nay consider, that this Design can never be too early propos'd and pursued. It were the most stupid Imagination to think that thou canst be happy too soon. There is one Year more past over thy Head. So much of the short Time of Life is irrecoverably elaps'd. Thou canst not assure thy self of living to the end of another Year. As young as thou art, Death (that makes no Distinction of Age when it has a Commission from the great Lord of Life) may surprize thee in thy wretched Neglects before another Year begin. Perhaps there are but a few Days or Weeks before thee wherein it

will be possible for thee to lay hold on eternal Life. So that thou hast no reasonable Temptation to put off this great Concern with tedious and unaccountable Delays. This being a Matter of the utmost Necessity and greatest Moment, should be first attended to and principally regarded.

3. Nay, consider, thou dost not put a due Value on eternal Life, if thou art not early solicitous to obtain it. Thou offerest an Indignity to it, if thou givest any thing the Preference before it. Thou affrontest the marvellous Grace of God, and slightest the most advantageous Offer it ever made to undeserving Sinners, if the Tenders of eternal Life meet not with an early as well as thankful Acceptance: For the practical Language of thy Delays is, That thou thinkest thou hast something greater and better in thy View.

4. Once more, consider how acceptable to Christ thy early Solicitude about eternal Life will be. If he so loved this young Ruler, because he found some Inclinations in him this way, how much more will he love those that are as inquisitive as he about the way to eternal Life, but come with a better Disposition to comply with the Terms of obtaining it.

O then take the Gospel-offer of eternal Life into your most serious Consideration. You that are young are the Seed of the Church, and the Hope of the rising Generation. O let us see you early asking the way to Zion with your Faces thitherward, Jer. 1. 5. However the Children of Infidel or ungodly Parents may thro' their wretched Ignorance or Inconsideration make light of Heaven and Salvation, let us find another Temper in you; to you these great and precious Promises of God do as it were first belong. O put in your early Claim to them. And if you are indeed solicitous to obtain eternal Life, and inquisitive about the way to it, Then,

II. Let me hence offer something for your Direction and Encouragement.

First, for your Direction.

And here I must begin with a Direction that the young Man in the Text was not so capable to receive, but which under the clear Dispensation of the Gospel 'tis proper to give to you.

Do you therefore seriously consider, that you are by Nature Children of Wrath, and Heirs of Hell. That eternal Life is the free Gift of God, owing to his most undeserved sovereign Mercy. That this eternal Life is in his Son. It was the invaluable Purchase of his precious Blood. It was the Fruit of his sinless Obedience and Righteousness. He has most clearly reveal'd and made it known. He is the great Dispenser of it. He is the sacred Root and Spring of that spiritual Life that is the Principle and Seed of it. You must therefore embrace it as the Gift of God thro' him. You must derive your Title to it from his Merits, and not your own. You must look for it as a Reward of Grace, and not of Debt. You must look for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus to eternal Life. You must implore his renewing Grace to form in you the Principles of that spiritual divine Life that is the Seed of it.

You must then resolve to comply with the necessary Terms of attaining it.

You must be deeply convinc'd, that there is an absolute Necessity of a renewing Change in your Nature, and sanctifying Change in your Lives, in order thereto. You must be sensible, that to corrupt Nature, The Gate is strait, and the Way is narrow that leads to eternal Life,

and few there be that find it. You must be perswaded that the Kingdom of Heaven must be taken, and eternal Life laid hold on by an holy Violence and Force. You must be so convinc'd of the incomparable Excellency of this Heavenly Prize, as to think no Labour or Toil, no Hardships or Sufferings too great to secure it. You must be willing to sell all for this Pearl of Price. You must count the Cost of Religion, and consider the Difficulties and Charge of this noble Enterprize. You must set God and the World, Heaven and Earth, the Advantages or Pleasures of this Life, and the endless Joys of a better, in serious Competition, and see which preponderates in your Hearts, and is like to weigh down the Scale, when it comes to the Tryal. You may be as closely put to it as the young Man in my Text. And, O consider, if the Hopes of eternal Life cannot prevail with you to abandon a darling Lust, to renounce the momentary Pleasures of Sin, to forsake vain and loose Company, to deny or restrain your sensual Appetites, how shall it ever prevail with you to forego the dearest Enjoyments of Life, nay, even Life it self? O then consider, that in this matter God and Heaven will admit of no Rival. You must either quit your Hopes of eternal Life, or abandon every thing that stands in Competition with it. What do you then resolve upon? Will you on these Terms take up your Cross and follow Christ, or will you rather go away, tho' sorrowful, from him? Shall the Love of a base Lust, or shall the Love of this World part you and him? Never dream of making a Composition between Christ and Belial, Heaven and the World. Make your Choice one way or other. If eternal Life be your Choice, let every thing be subordinate to the great Design of securing it, every thing rejected and abandon'd that stands in opposition to it, or competition with it.

Secondly, Let me suggest something also for your Encouragement.

And 'tis in short, that eternal Life will infinitely compensate all you can do or suffer in order to the Attainment of it.

Eternal Life is the Sum of all that Good that an immortal Soul can desire, or is capable to enjoy. It includes in it the highest Perfection of our reasonable Nature, resulting from the clearest Vision of God, and exactest Conformity to his Nature and Will. It includes the utmost Happiness of our State as it will result from the most vigorous Exercise of our intellectual Powers on the noblest Objects, from the full Enjoyment of God, of Christ, and of the whole heavenly Society. A State of Perfection and Happiness as far above our Comprehension as 'tis above our Desert. And sure this is so inestimable a Prize as we should think no Pains or Diligence too great to secure. What Difficulties can we endure, what Hazards can we run, what Sufferings can we undergo, that are worthy to be compar'd with such a transcendent Glory as this? What Madness would it be to prefer either the Filth of Sin or the Dirt of this World before it? Who would not sacrifice the momentary Pleasures of Sin, nay, the most idolized Enjoyments of Life, to the more valuable Hopes of such a blessed Immortality? Let us then freely abandon our sensual Lusts, nay, be ready cheerfully to forego our dearest earthly Possessions for this heavenly Treasure. We need not matter what we lose, when it will be compensated with that inestimable Gain of Eternal Life.

S E R-

S E R M O N V.

Preach'd at *Dublin* on the 30th of September, 1705.

On the Case of the PENITENT THIEF.

Luke xxiii. 39—43.

39. *And one of the Malefactors which were hang'd, rail'd on him, saying, If thou be Christ, save thy self and us.*
 40. *But the other answering, rebuked him, saying, Dost thou not fear God, seeing thou art in the same Condemnation?*
 41. *And we indeed justly, seeing we receive the due Reward of our Deeds; But this Man hath done nothing amiss.*
 42. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord! Remember me when thou comest into thy Kingdom.*
 43. *And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.*

THE Passage I have read, is, when duly understood, so fruitful a Source of Instruction and Comfort to every true Penitent, and yet so liable, when misapprehended, to be abus'd and perverted by such as wrest the holy Scriptures to their own Destruction, that it may be of great Service to the Interest of Religion to explain it, and direct you to the due Improvement of it, and to caution you against any such Misapplication of it as would prove extremely dangerous to your own Souls.

It contains indeed a remarkable Instance of a late Convert to Christianity, but such a one, whose Conversion was not only sincere, but produc'd such eminent Effects and Fruits as were extraordinary and surprizing, and do deserve our most attentive Consideration.

What I shall offer to your Meditation from the Words will be contain'd in the Prosecution of the following Observations from them, each whereof will be greatly illustrated, by the Example of this late Convert in my Text. From what is here recorded concerning him, we may observe,

I. That true Conversion will appear in the genuine Exercises and Fruits of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

II. That where a Man's Guilt has been very heinous and aggravated, it may be reasonably expected in a sincere Convert, that the Effects and Fruits of his Repentance and Faith should be very remarkable and extraordinary.

III. There is a Possibility of a Man's being a sincere, tho' late Convert, and of such a Convert's obtaining Mercy and Salvation.

I shall then by way of Application caution you against any perverse and dangerous Abuse of this Doctrine, and direct you to the true Improvement that should be made of it.

I. We may observe from this Passage concerning the converted Thief, That true Conversion will appear in the genuine Exercises and Fruits of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

'Tis evident to all that consider the present State of our lapsed Nature, That we are under the heinous Guilt of a voluntary Defection and Estrangement from

the Blessed God. Fallen Man has practically disclaimed God's Propriety in him as his absolute Owner, by living to himself, and not to God. He has renounc'd his Allegiance to the Majesty of Heaven, his only rightful Sovereign, by setting up his perverse and misguided Will in opposition to the holy Will and Law of God. And he has rejected the blessed God from being his Chief and Sovereign Good, by preferring the momentary Pleasures of Sin, and the vain Enjoyments of this World before his Favour and Love, and the eternal Fruition of him as his only satisfying Portion. He has forsaken God the Fountain of Living Waters, and hewn to himself broken Cisterns that will hold no Water, Jer. ii. 13.

This being the wretched State and Disposition of fallen Man towards God, it has seem'd meet to his infinite Wisdom, in order to the bringing back his revolted Creatures to himself, to constitute a glorious Mediator (viz. his incarnate Son) and to send him on this blessed Errand of reconciling the guilty World to himself. 'Tis in his atoning Death and Sacrifice that he has contriv'd the marvellous Expedient of declaring his Righteousness to the World, and rendering the Exercise of his pardoning Mercy consistent with it: So that he appears just (the Hater and Avenger of Sin) at the same time that he is the gracious Justifier of all that believe in his Son, — Rom. iii. 24, 25. — By him therefore he has publish'd the free Offers of Reconciliation and Peace, of Pardon and Eternal Life, to all that return to their offended Father thro' this blessed Mediator. 'Tis in the Name of Christ that the Apostles were commission'd to preach Repentance and Remission of Sins to all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem. — Luke xxiv. 47. — And that this was a comprehensive Summary of the Gospel they publish'd, we may see from that Passage of the Apostle Paul, wherein he declares to his Converts at Ephesus, That he had kept nothing back that was profitable to them, but had declar'd to them the whole Counsel of God, he adds, Testifying both to the Jews and to the Greeks (or Gentiles) Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, — Acts xx. 20, 21. compared with ver. 27.

A true Convert then is one that returns to God, as his offended, but reconcilable Father, thro' Jesus Christ as his only Mediator and Peace-maker.

And the Sincerity of his Conversion manifests it self in the genuine Effects and Fruits of his Repentance and Faith.

By Repentance the Bent of his Heart is turn'd from Sin, and from this vain World, to the blessed God; to whom he now freely gives up himself as his absolute Owner and supreme Lord, and only satisfying Portion, resolving to live to him, to obey and serve him, and seek his final Happiness and Rest in him.

And this Change of the Bent of his Heart towards God produces in him an ingenuous Shame and Sorrow for his past Sins, an humbling Conviction of the terrible Vengeance he has thereby deserv'd, an earnest Application to the infinite Mercy of his offended Father, for the free Forgiveness of them, and a sincere Purpose and steadfast Endeavour after new Obedience.

By Faith he receives Jesus Christ as his only Mediator, believing the Truth of all those Offers of Pardon and Salvation that he came to reveal; relying on the Efficacy of his Death, and Prevalency of his Intercession for the obtaining those offer'd Blessings; consenting to, and complying with the reasonable Terms on which they are offer'd, and particularly that of putting his Neck under the just and gracious Yoke of his Lord Redeemer.

And accordingly we may in this Convert in my Text, observe the genuine Exercise and Fruits both of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

We may observe the genuine Exercise and Fruits of Repentance towards God.

This appears in that awful Reverence and Fear of God that his Soul was now possessed with, and which he reproaches his Fellow-sufferer for the want of. Dost thou not fear God (saith he) since thou art in the same Condemnation? q. d. why dost thou upbraid him with his pretended and imaginary Crimes, when the Justice of an offended God is pursuing thee for thy own? Whatever his Case be, thou art conscious to thy self of those heinous Offences that have brought thee to this shameful and painful Death, by the just Laws of Men, and which without deep Repentance will expose thee to the dreadful Vengeance of that God, whose Tribunal is more awful, whose Doom is more formidable, whose Punishments are unspeakably more severe and more durable than any earthly Judge can inflict. And we may justly from this seasonable Rebuke to his Fellow-sufferer infer, That his own Soul was possessed with a reverential Awe of God, with a most abasing Sense of his own Guilt before him, with a just Self-loathing, and Self-abbhorrence for it, and with a deep Concern to escape that Wrath and Vengeance of God which he was conscious he had so greatly deserv'd, and stood in need of infinite Mercy to shelter him from.

Accordingly he farther testifies the Sincerity of his Repentance by owning and vindicating both the Justice of God and Man in the Sufferings he was now to undergo. We indeed justly, (saith he) for we receive the due Reward of our Deeds. He is far from complaining of the Severity of the Sentence, or of the Conduct of Divine Providence in bringing him to be thus made a Spectacle and Example of publick Justice for the warning of others. He owns the Punishment (how ignominious and painful soever) to be the due Desert of his odious Crimes, and therefore justifies God and Man in the Infliction of it, meekly kissing the Rod, and humbly accepting this Punishment of his Iniquity, being only concern'd to escape the more terrible Vengeance of eternal Fire. He therefore penitently arraigns and condemns himself here, that if possible he may obtain Mercy from an incensed God, and not come into eternal Condemnation.

Nay, the genuine Fruits of his sincere Repentance appear in his Zeal for the Glory of God, and chari-

table Concern for the endanger'd Soul of his impenitent Fellow-sufferer.

To this purpose he not only vindicates the just Hand of God in their Sufferings, but earnestly endeavours to possess his Fellow-sufferer with a just Awe and Dread of that more terrible Vengeance of his to which he was liable in the other World, and which his continued Hardness and Impenitency would unavoidably expose him to. He shew'd hereby his Readiness to give Glory unto God by his open Confession of his own Guilt, and of his Submission to the paternal Justice of God in the Punishment of it; and his tender Compassion to the Soul of his Fellow-criminal, in whose Heart he does his utmost to excite the same penitential Sentiments and Affections that he felt in his own.

Nor was the Exercise and Effects of his Faith in Christ less remarkable than those of his Repentance towards God.

Nay, so conspicuous and eminent were the Fruits of his Faith, that what our Saviour elsewhere said concerning the Centurion (that was only a Gentile Proselyte) I may apply to this penitent Malefactor, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great Faith, no not in Israel. Such was the Faith of this dying Convert, so clear Apprehensions did he discover of the Messiah's Kingdom, so full a Perswasion of it did he manifest, so open and so glorious a Profession did he make of his Affiance and Trust in him, even in those Circumstances that carry'd the strongest Temptation to Infidelity, as might justly make even the best of his Disciples ashamed of their Doubts and of the Weakness of their Faith, in that Hour and Power of Darkness. Peter, that seem'd the most forward of all the Disciples in his Zeal, had but newly betray'd his shameful Weakness by thrice denying his Lord and Master. But this penitent Malefactor was so far from being ashamed to own his Faith in him, that he openly vindicates his Innocence in the Face of all his malicious Enemies, and bears a publick Testimony to the Righteousness of his Person and Cause, even when he saw him suffering under the Imputation of the most grievous Crimes. We indeed (saith he) receive the due Reward of our Deeds, but this Man hath done nothing amiss. (Nothing faulty and worthy of such a Punishment.) He does therefore in effect charge his malicious Prosecutors with their horrid Injustice in condemning him for a Blasphemer, who was truly what he declar'd himself to be, the Christ, or Messiah, the Son of God, and Saviour of the World; and in adjudging him an Enemy to Caesar, because he had own'd himself to be the King of Israel, whereas he had taken away all Ground to accuse him of Sedition against earthly Princes, by asserting, That his Kingdom was not of this World, (and therefore could not interfere with any just Rights of the civil Magistrate.) He therefore openly espouses and pleads the Cause of the Son of God, against both Jews and Gentiles who had conspir'd to condemn him, and by asserting his perfect Innocence, he does in effect charge them with the Guilt of being the Murderers of the Prince of Life, and the Lord of Glory. For under that Character he considers him, even under these disgraceful Circumstances, in which Men and Devils conspir'd with all imaginable Scorn to insult and triumph over him. (As will farther appear in what follows.)

The Disciples did indeed profess to believe the Messiah's Kingdom; but their Minds appear too deeply tinctured with those carnal and low Apprehensions of it which the Body of the Jewish Nation had so deeply imbib'd. They as well as the rest imagin'd the Messiah was to be a great temporal Prince, that he would free the Jews from the Roman Yoke, that he would sit on the earthly Throne of David, and advance the Jewish Nation as well as their Religion to a State of external Prosperity and Glory. They were therefore grievously stumbled and offended, when our Lord forewarn'd them of his ignominious Sufferings and Death. And Peter express'd the real Sentiments of the rest when on that Occasion he presum'd to rebuke and expostulate with his Master,

Master, saying unto him, *be it far from thee, Lord, this shall not be unto thee*, Mat. xvi. 22. And that the rest were as ignorant in the matter as he, we may plainly see from Luke ix. 44, 45. where our Saviour inculcating this Truth upon them, *Let these Sayings* (saith he) *sink down into your Ears, for the Son of Man shall be deliver'd into the Hands of Men*, 'tis added, *But they understood not this Saying, and it was hid from them that they perceived it not, and they feared to ask him of that Saying*. And how far the Faith of the Disciples concerning the Kingdom of Christ was stagger'd at the View of his ignominious Sufferings and Death, we may see from what the two Disciples that were going to Emaus express on that Occasion. Having spoken of Jesus of Nazareth, a Prophet mighty in Deed and Word before God and all the People, whom their chief Priests and Rulers had deliver'd to be condemned to Death, and had crucify'd, they add, *But we trusted it had been he which should have redeemed Israel*, Luke xxiv. 19, 20, 21. — So doubtfully do they speak of the matter, even after they had heard the credible Report of his Resurrection. (As we may see from the following Words.) So justly does our Saviour upbraid them as Fools, and slow of Heart to believe all that the Prophets had spoken, ver. 25. Nay, even after the Resurrection of Christ had reviv'd their Hopes of his Kingdom, yet that Question they propose to him seems to argue that they were not fully cur'd of their too carnal Conceptions of it; *Wilt thou at this Time restore the Kingdom to Israel?* Acts i. 6.

But now this late Convert even in the very Moment of our Saviour's Sufferings entertains those clear and accurate Notions of his Kingdom, and manifests that stedfast Perswasion of it, that the Disciples, who had so long convers'd with him had not yet attained to. He was perswaded that his ignominious Sufferings themselves were but the Passage and Entrance into his Glory. He foresaw that our Saviour would, after the short Scene of his Humiliation was over, begin the Administration of that Spiritual Kingdom, in which he should have Power given him over all Flesh, that he might give eternal Life to as many as the Father had given to him, John xvii. 2. He was perswaded, That he whom the Jews and Romans were now crucifying under the Character of a vile Malefactor, should quickly become the Lord and Judge of the Quick and Dead, before whose Judgment-Seat all must appear and receive their final Doom. He foresaw that he who was now dying, should live for evermore, and have the Keys of Death, and of the invisible World, put into his Hands. And therefore he commends his departing Soul to him for Protection and Mercy, when he should be enthron'd at the right Hand of the Father, and have all Power in Heaven and Earth committed to him. Remember me, Lord, (saith he) when thou comest into thy Kingdom, q. d. "Lord, I am a guilty and despicable Client, unworthy of thy Patronage, yet let not me be forgotten when thou that hankest now on an infamous Cross, shalt sit down on thy glorious Throne. Let me find a Place among those Clients whose Cause thou wilt plead, among those penitent Sinners whom thou wilt powerfully save, among those that believe in thee, of whom thou hast said, *That they shall not perish, but have eternal Life*. To thy powerful Mediation I commend my guilty Soul; in thy prevalent Intercession I trust and hope; on thy Almighty Power I rely, who art able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by thee, and who hast said, *Thou wilt in no wise cast out any that come to thee for Shelter and Refuge*." And O what an eminent Act of Faith was it in this poor Malefactor, to own him for his Lord whom he now saw expos'd to the Death of the vilest of Men and meanest of Slaves! To believe him entitled to a most glorious Crown, whom he saw ready to expire on an ignominious Cross! To expect eternal Salvation from him over whom his Enemies were insulting as unable to save himself from such grievous and reproachful Sufferings! To look thro' the darkest Scene of his Abasement and Sufferings, and even then entertain a believing and joyful Prospect of the Glories of an

eternal Kingdom! We might justly say to him as our Saviour did to the Syro-phanician Woman; Great, O Woman, is thy Faith. Great indeed, when it could surmount all these Difficulties and Obstacles, when it could pierce thro' all these dark Clouds, and so easily and vigorously repel all those strong Temptations to Diffidence and Unbelief.

Nay, once more, we may observe, That whereas the rest of the Disciples, who (as I suggested) entertain'd too carnal Apprehensions of the Messiah's Kingdom, were too ready to indulge an aspiring and ambitious Humour (as appears by that eager Debate among them, *Who should be greatest in it?* Mark ix. 34. On the contrary, this late Convert discovers that true Humility of Mind which our Lord so often and earnestly recommends to them as a Qualification for the highest Advancement there. He is far from offering so presumptuous a Request as that of the two Sons of Zebedee, *That he might sit at the right or left Hand of Christ in his Kingdom*. No, all that he sues for is, *That Christ would remember him when he came into his Kingdom*, q. d. "Lord, I am conscious to my self that I deserve no Place there. I am utterly unworthy of such a Favour or Dignity; yet since thou camest to seek and save that which is lost, nay, to save the chief of Sinners, make me also an Object and Monument of thy saving Power and Mercy. Let me be admitted into thy Kingdom, tho' as one of the least there. Remember me, tho' most undeserving of thy Notice and Consideration. Let my heinous Guilt be wash'd away in the Laver of thy precious Blood. And let thy Merits entitle me to the Happiness of that Kingdom which none can claim as a Reward of Debt, and which I of all Men must thankfully own to be a Reward of Grace."

You see then what a remarkable Exercise both of Repentance and Faith the Conversion of this late Penitent was attended with, and how noble and excellent Fruits thereof appear'd in him.

But this leads me to the

II^d. Observation from the Words, viz. *That where a Man's Guilt has been heinous and aggravated, it may reasonably be expected in a sincere Convert, that the Effects and Fruits of his Repentance and Faith should be great and extraordinary*.

The Reasonableness hereof is so obvious and clear, that I need not insist long on the Illustration of it. Who does not see and readily acknowledge that heinous Guilt calls for deeper Humiliation and Sorrow; and that the degrees of our penitent Shame and Self-abbhorrence should bear some Proportion to the Aggravations of our Sins. How fit is it that Iniquities of scarlet and crimson Dye should open in us all the Springs of godly Sorrow, and draw a Flood of penitential Tears from our Eyes! How reasonable is it that those who with Peter have fallen foully should weep bitterly. How becoming is it for a penitent Magdalene that had so much forgiven her, to express such a peculiar Warmth of devout Affection to her Blessed Saviour in washing his Feet with her Tears, and wiping them with the Hairs of her Head! Luke vii. 44. — How fit was it that such a penitent Publican as Zaccheus should become as eminent a Pattern of generous Charity as once he had been a scandalous one of Injustice and Oppression! Luke xix. 8. How becoming was it for a converted Saul to become as zealous a Preacher and Defender as he had once been a Destroyer and Persecutor of the Christian Faith! How suitable that Peter when recover'd from his Fall should express as signal Courage in the Cause of Christ as once he betray'd of shameful Weakness, and that he should actually seal that Faith with his Blood which his Tongue had once thro' Fear renounc'd!

And accordingly we find something remarkably parallel hereto in the Case of this converted Malefactor. He had doubtless been engag'd in a very leud and flagitious Course of Life. 'Tis highly probable, he had never come to any Sense of his Folly and Wickedness before the time of his Apprehension and Condemnation.

demnation. Nay, 'tis most probable, he had never till now consider'd the Pretensions of Jesus of Nazareth to be the true Messiah, the Son of God and Saviour of the World. He had a Life of great Guilt to look upon; and you see he does it with all that Shame and Self-Abhorrence, with that Zeal in justifying God, and those condemning Reflections on himself, that a holy Fear and Dread of God, and an ingenuous Hope of his Mercy could inspire him with. And for his Faith in our blessed Saviour, I have largely shew'd, that there was something in the Exercise of it very wonderful and extraordinary, very singular and surprizing. It must needs appear so, to see a poor condemned Criminal openly owning that blessed Redeemer, whom so many of his own Disciples had forsaken, and one of them had deny'd! To hear him publicly vindicating his Innocence, when they were asham'd or afraid to plead his Cause! To find him no way staggering at that Cross which had like to have prov'd so dangerous a Stumbling-block to them! To observe him speaking with such Assurance of the Kingdom of Christ at a Time when they were ready to doubt of it! And so joyfully embracing the Promises of it when their Faith was so ready to waver and sink, and so earnestly aspiring to a Share in those future Glories of it, which they had so weak and dubious Apprehensions of! There is, I say, in all this, something very unusual and astonishing, that highly recommends the Faith of this dying Penitent. So that I think we may truly say, that he did as eminently glorify the Son of God, by bearing this illustrious Testimony to him with his dying Breath, at this very time of his ignominious Sufferings and Abasement, as any that ever seal'd the Faith of a risen Saviour with their own Blood. But having spoken so much on this Head before, I need not now farther enlarge on it. But shall proceed to the

III^d Observation from the Words, viz. *That there is a Possibility of a late Convert's being a sincere one, and of such a sincere, tho' late Convert's obtaining Mercy and Salvation.*

That a Man may be a sincere, tho' late Convert, is manifest from this Example of the Penitent Thief.

I do not indeed see any Reason for supposing (as some have done) that his Conversion was of no earlier a Date, than the very Moment of his Sufferings. Nor is that Supposition needful to reconcile what the Evangelist Luke here relates concerning him, with what the Evangelist Matthew asserts, *That the Thieves that were crucify'd with him cast the same in his Teeth.* Some indeed, to accord these two Relations, have imagin'd, that the Penitent Thief first joyn'd with the other in reviling our blessed Saviour; but upon the sudden Conviction of his Judgment, chang'd his Language and Behaviour. And upon that Supposition, there is no Appearance of Inconsistency and Contrariety in what the two Evangelists relate.

But as this Supposition is improbable, so 'tis unnecessary; because nothing is more usual than to speak in the plural Number, when only the Act of a single Person is intended to be express'd. Thus the Soldiers are said to bring Vinegar to Christ when one of them did it. — Luke xxiii. 36. and John xix. 29. compared with Matt. xxvii. 48. — Mark xv. 36. — So 'tis said the Disciples had Indignation — Matt. xxvi. 8. when one of them had so, John xii. 4. The utmost that can be reasonably suppos'd, is, that the Evangelist Matthew might not have had so particular Information concerning this Passage; and therefore his Omission of it is supply'd by the Evangelist Luke, as St. John has several Passages omitted by both. But tho' we should date this penitent Malefactor's Conversion from the Time of his Apprehension and Imprisonment, 'tis sufficient to denominate him a late Convert; and what I have already suggested from the Text, is sufficient to convince us that he was a sincere one, since the Fruits of his Conversion were too eminent and conspicuous to leave any Doubt concerning the Truth of it. And this one Instance is enough to shew the bare Possibility of the Thing.

And 'tis as clear from this Instance that such a

sincere, tho' late Convert may obtain Mercy and Salvation. For the Answer given by our blessed Lord to the Request of this dying Penitent, viz. *Verily I say unto thee, this Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise,* plainly shews that his Petition was granted; and our blessed Lord assures him of a Share in the Happiness and Glory of his faithful Followers.

I shall not at present enter into that Dispute, whether our Saviour by *Paradise* here means the highest Heavens themselves, or some middle Place and State of Rest and Happiness, yet short of the highest Heavens. Why I prefer the former Opinion before the latter, (which yet was the common Opinion of the ancient Christians) I have elsewhere more fully shewn in a distinct Discourse on those Words, and shall not now repeat the Arguments then offer'd to that Purpose.

'Tis sufficient at present to observe, That the sincere Repentance and Faith of this late Convert were not rejected. But that the marvellous Riches of divine Grace did superabound towards him, whose Guilt had so much and so long abounded. And we may thence infer, that in any Case that is truly parallel to this, we may expect that the Procedure of the boundless Mercy of God will be the same. And that tho' such late Repentance is very seldom true, yet true and sincere Repentance may, in such extraordinary Circumstances, be accepted, tho' late. Where God has set no express Limits and Bounds to his infinite Mercy, it wou'd be Presumption in us to do it, when his Ways and Thoughts are as far above ours as the Heavens are above the Earth, Isa. iv. 8, 9.

It remains now that we make some Improvement of this practical Passage, and the Observations made thereon. And here,

First, I wou'd caution you against the common Abuse of this Passage that so many are guilty of, by taking Encouragement from thence to defer their Conversion to the last, to a Sick or Death-Bed.

Secondly, I would suggest to you the genuine Use and Improvement we should make of it.

First, I would caution you against the common Abuse of this Passage that so many are guilty of, by taking Encouragement from thence to defer their Conversion and Repentance to the last, to a Sick or Death-Bed.

They are ready to argue, the Thief on the Cross was a true, tho' late Penitent; And why may not I become one too in my last Moments? And as his late Repentance was accepted, so may mine. And therefore I may without any great Hazard defer it till then.

I might indeed here shew the Folly of delaying our Return to God at all, and much more to a Sick or Death-Bed, from several obvious but solid Considerations, that are commonly and justly alledg'd to this Purpose. I shall but briefly hint at such as these.

1. If our Conversion to God be in it self most desirable, there can be no Wisdom in the Delay of it.

A diseased Patient is not for protracting a necessary Cure, and is never afraid of being recover'd and heal'd too soon. And why then should we desire the Continuance of our spiritual Maladies, as if we could be Holy and Happy too soon? Can it ever be too early to regain the Favour of God, and to secure our own Salvation? If not, what reasonable Temptation can we have to put off our Repentance and Conversion to him?

2. Again, The Folly of such Delays appears in this, That they serve to no other End, than to render the great Work of Repentance more difficult, and more bitter and grievous.

They render it more difficult, this they do strengthening our vicious Habits, and corrupt Inclinations; by weakening the Resistance of our own Consciences, by grieving the Holy Spirit of God, and provoking him to retire from us, and to give us up to the Lusts of our own Hearts.

They render it more bitter, by increasing those Arrears of Guilt, and multiplying those Provocations that will cost us either deep Shame and Sorrow here, or remediless Horror and Anguish for ever. And every wilful presumptuous Sin will contribute to render the Pangs and Throws

Throws of the New-Birth more piercing and dolorous. And who that believes the Necessity of a sincere Conversion to God, wou'd, by such Delays, wilfully increase the Difficulties of it? Who wou'd knowingly sow the Seeds of inward Remorse and Terror in his own Mind? Who wou'd arm an accusing Conscience with the most grievous and Heart-piercing Stings? Why shou'd that necessary Work be delay'd, that may be now most easily and comfortably effected, and by Delays will be rendred more hard and more painful.

3. Again, *The utter Uncertainty of our Lives does still aggravate the Folly of such Delays.*

How many Thousands are cut off by such sudden Accidents, or such violent Diseases, as leave them no Leisure or no Capacity for engaging in that serious and solemn Work of Repentance and Conversion to God? And who, that might by a speedy Return to him, put his eternal Concerns into a safe Posture, would from Day to Day, run so manifest a Risque of remediless and endless Destruction? Can we find nothing but our Souls and our Salvation to put to such a desperate Venture, and to leave to such woful Uncertainties and Hazards?

But leaving these Considerations to be further pursu'd and improv'd in your own Meditations, what I shall now insist on is to shew, That this Example of the Penitent Thief can give no reasonable Encouragement to any Man to defer his Conversion to the last, and to put it off to a Death-Bed.

And to that Purpose, I shall briefly suggest the following Considerations. As,

1. It should be consider'd, *That this is the only Instance of a late Penitent accepted by God, recorded in all the Holy Scriptures.*

And what reasonable Encouragement can this give to defer our Repentance, that among so many Millions that have perish'd thro' their wilful Delays; 'tis possible that there may be one true tho' late Penitent, that happily escapes eternal Destruction. Wou'd it be thought a reasonable Inducement to any Sailor to venture upon such Rocks or Sands, as Thousands have been Shipwreck'd upon, that perhaps one or two for several Ages may have struck upon them, and yet come off, tho' with great Damage as well as Hazard? We are sure that Thousands, and Ten Thousands, are, by delaying their Repentance, betray'd into final Hardness, and consequently into eternal Perdition: And can it be any just Encouragement to us, to run the same desperate Risque, that there have been some very few and rare Examples of true, tho' late Penitents. Sure it shou'd, on the contrary, deter us effectually from going on wilfully in the Broad-Ways of Sin, upon Pretence of quitting them at last, that tho' we cannot say, *Vestigia nulla*, yet we may say, *Vestigia pauca retrorsum*; that scarce One among many Thousands of such, have ever made a safe Retreat from the Brink of Destruction.

But farther,

2. Let us consider, That as this is but a single Instance, so the Case of this late Penitent in my Text seems no way parallel to theirs, who being convinc'd of the Necessity of returning to God, do wilfully defer it to the last.

For any thing we know, his Repentance was begun some time ago, during the Season of a long Imprisonment, while his Punishment was delay'd. And so his Case has nothing parallel to theirs that put it off to the last Extremity, and to their dying Moments. For 'tis improbable to suppose that he should entertain so clear Notions of the Kingdom of Christ, without some former Instructions about it, and frequent Meditations on what the Scriptures of the Old Testament reveal concerning it. And if this be suppos'd, the very Foundation of those that build their Hopes on a Death-Bed-Repentance, from this Instance, sinks and falls to the Ground.

Again, We have no reason to believe, that this penitent Malefactor had ever before this time any such solemn Calls to Repentance, any such Discoveries of

the Mercy of God thro' a Mediator, any such Invitations to return to a reconcileable Father through him, as those have who now sit under the Dispensation of the Gospel. His former lewd Company and Converſe seems to have kept him out of the ordinary Road of such holy Instructions and Counsels, Admonitions and Warnings as we now enjoy. And 'tis probable that our Saviour's Apprehension and Trial might be the first Opportunity he had of any Enquiry about his Person and Doctrine, and the Kingdom of God which he came to preach.

But how vastly different is their Case, who have for many Years been follow'd with repeated Exhortations to return to God, who have been enlightned with the Knowledge of Christ, by the Gospel of Salvation's long sounding in their Ears; who have turn'd a deaf Ear to a Thousand loud Calls to Repentance; who have long stifled the Convictions of their own Consciences; who have long resisted the Solicitations, and quenched the Motions of the Spirit of God! Nay, who, tho' warn'd and perswaded of the Necessity of Conversion to God, and the Danger of Delays, do offer the highest Indignity and Affront to him, by putting it off to Old Age or a Death-Bed! As if they thought the Refuse and Dregs of their Time to be all that he deserves! As if it were then Time enough to engage in his Service, when they can serve the Devil and their Lusts no longer! As if it were then Time enough to flee to him when the World fails all their Hopes! As if a few dying Groans, or a few lifeless Prayers utter'd with their last Breath, were all the Homage and Devotion that he can reasonably claim! I am sure such hypocritical Mockers of God as these, can no way pretend their Case to be like that of this late Penitent in my Text. And for such, that late Repentance they pretend to resolve upon, is no better than a vile Dissimulation with God, and heinous Affront to him. And they have all possible reason to fear that he will reject the Dregs of their Time, when they have wilfully alienated the Prime of it from him; that he will curse those Deceivers that have a Male in their Flock, and would vow and sacrifice to him a lame and corrupt Thing, Mal. i. ult.—That he will turn as deaf an Ear to all their forced Cries for Mercy and Forgiveness, as they have done to all his Perswasions and Invitations to Repentance; that he will execute that awful Threatning, *Because I have called and ye refus'd, I have stretched out my Hand and no Man regarded. But ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would have none of my Reproof, I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear comes, when your Fear comes as Desolation, and your Destruction as a Whirlwind, when Distress and Anguish comes upon you. Then shall they call on me, but I will not answer, they shall seek me early but shall not find me, &c.* Prov. i. 24, 25, &c.

3. As the Case of this penitent Malefactor is so different from that of such as wilfully delay their Repentance to the last, so the Effects and Fruits of it appear to be as different.

There was indeed something (as I suggested) very extraordinary and surprizing in them.

Such an humble Submission to the paternal Justice of God; such a Zeal for his Glory; such a tender Concern for the Salvation of his Fellow-Sufferer; but especially such an open Vindication of the Innocence of the Son of God, when suffering under the false Imputation of the blackest Crimes; such a Faith in the Glories of his Kingdom, when he saw him expos'd to the Ignominy of his Cross; such a strong Perswasion of his approaching Exaltation, when he beheld him in his lowest Abasement; such an humble, but believing Recommendation of himself to the powerful Mediation of a dying Redeemer, were marvellous Instances of a strong and lively Faith. So that this poor Penitent had those happy Advantages of glorifying the Son of God, that perhaps none ever had before him, or ever will have; and perhaps he improv'd them to a Degree that no Man ever did, or ever will do.

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And

And what is there *parallel* to this in the pretended *Repentance* of most dying Persons? Are those *Prayers* and *Crys* for Mercy, which nothing but the present fear of Death and Judgment extort from them in their last Moments, to be compar'd with this? Or are they generally any better than the *Howlings* of condemned Malefactors, who regret their *Punishment* much more than their *Crimes*, and are not so much sorry that they have *offended* as that they are now like to *suffer* for it? Alas, what is their *Repentance* usually but a faint shew of *Renouncing* their Sins when their Sins have rather *left* them? What is it but a shew of fleeing to God for Refuge, when every thing forsakes them to which they had trusted before? And a Promise of engaging in his Service when they have no Time left for it? What is it but a faint *Wish* that tho' they have wilfully refus'd to live the *Life of the Righteous*, they may yet dye his Death, and their last end be like his? And how little these slender appearances of *Repentance* usually signify, is manifest from their so often returning to their Sins as soon as their Danger is over. And how quickly do their Sick-Bed Vows then prove as the *Morning Cloud* and the *early Dew* that soon goes away? *Hosea* iv. 6.—But sure any one may see, how little Encouragement the Example of this late Penitent in my Text gives any Man to rely on the *Validity* and *Acceptableness* of such a *Repentance* as this.

There seems to be in the Case of the Penitent Thief something extraordinary as to the Circumstances of Time.

It might be congruous to the Wisdom of God at the Time of our Saviour's Sufferings, to give such a singular and extraordinary Instance of the atoning Vertue of his Death and Sacrifice, when it cou'd expiate the Guilt of so great a Sinner, and open the Kingdom of Heaven to so late, tho' sincere a Penitent. And therefore this Instance of the Acceptance and Salvation of so late a Penitent, is not to be drawn into common Example, or made the Standard of the ordinary Methods of Divine Grace towards those that live under the clearest Dispensation of it.

On all these Considerations it appears, that those do grossly pervert this Passage who draw any Encouragement from it to defer their Repentance to the last.

This leads us therefore,

II. To consider, *What Use and Improvement we shou'd make of this Passage.*

And,

1. We may here see a Glorious Instance of the marvellous Efficacy of Divine Grace, and Vertue of our Redeemer's Sacrifice.

How marvellous, how free and sovereign was the Efficacy of Divine Grace, that cou'd transform so heinous a Malefactor into so glorious a Confessor, and of such a Stone raise up such a Son of faithful Abraham! What is impossible to his Grace, who can of so corrupt a part of the common Mass form to himself such a Vessel of Mercy? How did our Blessed Saviour in this Instance begin the accomplishment of his own Prediction, that when lifted up on the Cross he wou'd draw all Men to him, *John* xii. 32. How irresistibly did he draw the Heart of this poor Criminal that seem'd so little susceptible of such Divine Impressions on it?

Nay, here we may see the extensive Vertue of our Redeemer's Sacrifice.

And sure its propitiatory Vertue must be great indeed, when it cou'd expiate the Guilt of this Malefactor's whole vitious Life, and make him whose Sins had been of a Scarlet and Crimson Dye, white as Wool and Snow. Sure the Merit of his Obedience must be invaluablely great, who cou'd entitle one that deserved Death as the Wages of so innumerable and great Offences, to Eternal Life; and cou'd open the Gates of Heaven to one who had been so long an Heir of Hell.

O let us then learn to admire the victorious Power of Divine Grace, and the invaluable Merit of the Redeemer's Sufferings and Oblation.

2. We shou'd improve this Passage as an Argument to excite the greatest of Sinners to Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Apostle reviewing those Riches of Divine Grace which he himself had experienc'd, who was once a Blasphemer and Persecutor, crys out with humble Admiration, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ came to save Sinners, of whom he was chief, 1 Tim. i. 15.*—And to such as have been once the chief of Sinners, we may justly propose the boundless extent of Divine Mercy, and the all-sufficient Vertue of our Saviour's propitiatory Sacrifice, as an Incitement to return to God by him. What tho' thy Sins be as Talents for Weight, and as ten Thousand for Number, there is with him sovereign Compassion to forgive the whole Debt upon thy penitent Suit and Application! What tho' thy Iniquities be of the deepest Dye, there is atoning Efficacy in the precious Blood of the unblemish'd Lamb of God to wash it away, if thou dost unfeignedly renounce thy Sins, and dost by Faith sprinkle that Blood on thy guilty Conscience. 'Tis only thy Impenitency or Unbelief that can lay an insuperable Bar in the Way of Divine Mercy, and render the Redeemer's Propitiation ineffectual to thee. The Sin against the Holy Ghost is therefore unpardonable, because 'tis a Rejection of the only Sacrifice that can take away the Guilt of Sin, and of the only Offers that God has made of Forgiveness by him. Let then no heinous Sinner that is now truly penitent, add to all his other Guilt a Despair in the Mercy of God to the truly penitent, and a Distrust in the Mediation of that Lamb of God that takes away the Sin of the World. At least, it is every way adviseable for such to flee to the only Refuge that is before them, to cast themselves down at the Mercy-Seat of God, on which the Blood of the Mediator is sprinkled, resolving if they must perish that they will perish there. Such shou'd reason as the Inhabitants of Nineveh, *Let us turn every one from his evil way, &c. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn from his fierce Anger that we perish not? Jonah* iii. 8, 9.

3. Let such as have been great Sinners, and are now become real Converts, consider, that 'tis justly expected the Fruits of their Repentance and Faith shou'd bear some proportion to the great Aggravations of their former Guilt.

Heinous and abominable Crimes shou'd not be lamented with common measures of Shame and Grief, but with the deepest Abasement and Compunction of Soul. They shou'd be bewail'd if possible with Tears of Blood. The more often we have lay'd our selves open to the condemning Sentence of God, the more severely shou'd we arraign and condemn our selves; and the greater Treasures of Divine Wrath we have heapt up, the more shou'd we abhor our selves and repent in Dust and Ashes; and the more earnestly shou'd we deprecate the Severity of God's unallay'd Justice, and flee to his infinite Compassions as our only Refuge. The more of our past Time has been alienated from God, the more diligently shou'd we redeem the few Moments that remain for the glorifying him. The more we need the atoning Vertue of the Redeemer's Blood, the more precious shou'd He be in our Eyes, who shed it to wash us from all our Guilt. The more unworthy we are of his Heavenly Kingdom, the more shou'd we admire his Grace that has call'd us to the hope of it; and the more importunately shou'd we recommend our selves to the merciful Remembrance and favourable Regard of him that is the great Lord of the invisible World, and the Arbiter of our Eternal Lot there. Nay, the more we owe all our Expectations of an Eternal Reward to the Grace of God thro' his Merits, the more solicitous shou'd we be to become his peculiar People, zealous of good Works. We shou'd be studious to do all that's possible to express our ardent Gratitude to him, by asserting his Cause, promoting his Interest, and advancing his Glory, that he may remember and receive us into his Eternal Kingdom, and admit us as he did this sincere tho' late Penitent in my Text, into the Joys of his Heavenly Paradise. Amen!

I might add,

4. Let us not give over our prudent and compassionate Attempts for Reclaiming and Recovering heinous Sinners from an utter Despair of Success. We know

not

not how far the Efficacy of Divine Grace may prevail to turn a disobedient Sinner to the Wisdom of the Just. Nor how large the Extent of Divine Mercy may be in multiplying to forgive where a Sinner has multiply'd to

offend. Let us then while there is any hope, Nay, any possibility of Success, endeavour to turn Sinners from the Error of their Way, that we may save a Soul from Death, and hide a multitude of Sins, *James v. 20.*

S E R M O N VI.

A CHARGE to the RICH.

I Tim. VI. 17, 18, 19.

17. *Charge them that are rich in this World, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the Living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy.*
18. *That they do good, that they be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.*
19. *Laying up in Store for themselves a good Foundation against the Time to come, that they may lay hold on Eternal Life.*

TIS one of the general Directions which the Apostle Paul gives to this Evangelist Timothy, that he shou'd study to shew himself approved unto God, a Work-man that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth, 2 Tim. ii. 15. And accordingly, 'tis the Design of the Apostle in both these Epistles to instruct him, how he shou'd apply himself to the different Ranks and Sorts of Persons he had to do with. And my Text contains his particular Instructions in what Manner, and with what particular Counsels and Advice he shou'd apply himself to those that are Rich in this World.

The Apostle plainly supposes that he might have some such Rich Persons under his Pastoral Inspection and Care. 'Tis true indeed he elsewhere tells us, that not many wise Men after the Flesh (i. e. not many Worldly Politicians) not many Mighty, not many Noble are call'd, 1 Cor. i. 26. Intimating how rare it wou'd be to find Greatness and Goodness in a happy conjunction, and to see those that had ample Possessions on Earth become the eager Candidates of the Heavenly Inheritance; yet blessed be God, he does not say, that none such are called. For on the contrary, where the Profession of Christianity has the Establishment and Countenance of Human Laws, and even Princes themselves lay their Scepters at the Foot of Christ, we may not only expect that a regard to Interest and Credit will oblige the generality of the Rich as well as the Poor to espouse so reputable a Profession, but that some will embrace it in Sincerity, and not only wear the fashionable Livery of Christ, but become his unfeigned Followers. 'Tis true indeed 'tis but comparatively a very few of the Rich and Great that have any more of Christianity than the empty Name and Title. The most of them put off God with their Kuee while the World has their Hearts; God has their complemental and lifeless Devotions, but Mammon the vigorous Service of their Lives. And no wonder, when our Blessed Saviour has represented their Temptations to be so great and strong, and on that account spoke of their Salvation as a matter so extremely difficult, in Terms that ought to startle and awaken their Consciences to the strictest Jealousy and Caution. 'Tis easier (saith he) for a Camel (or Cable-Rope) to pass thro' the Eye of a Needle (a Proverbial Speech to represent what was seemingly impossible, and at best exceeding difficult and rare) than for a Rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God, Mat. xix. 24.

And this very Consideration suggests to us, that as the Advice in my Text is very proper for such, so 'tis what the

most of their Quality and Rank greatly need to have often lay'd before them, and with the greatest Earnestness inculcated upon them.

Since therefore this Instruction given by the Apostle to Timothy is in effect given to every particular Pastor, I shall, in pursuance of the Obligations thereby lay'd on my self, apply my self to you that are rich in this World, with the particular Charge here mention'd in my Text, and enforce upon your Consciences the Practice of those important Duties which are so particularly suited to your Rank and Station, your Condition and Circumstances in the World.

Accordingly there being no Occasion to form the Words into any doctrinal Proposition, I shall, in treating of them, consider the following Heads.

I. To whom this Advice must be address'd? viz. The Rich of this World.

II. By whom? By Timothy here, and consequently by every faithful Dispenser of the Gospel.

III. Under what Notion the Advice is to be address'd to them? viz. That of a Charge.

IV. The Duties themselves which are to be thus urg'd and enforc'd upon them, viz. That they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, &c. That they do Good, that they be rich in good Works, &c.

Of these in their Order. And,

I. Let us consider, To whom this Advice must be address'd? viz. To the Rich in this World.

If you ask me, Who they are that come under this Character and Denomination? I answer, That the Character is of large Extent, and admits of very different Degrees. For the same Person may in respect of those that have vast Possessions be comparatively poor, who yet in respect of those that have no visible means of Subsistence, and are reduc'd to extream Straits, may be justly accounted rich. And this ought to be carefully consider'd, because we find many, that tho' they would take it for a great Affront to be thought poor, yet when we come to urge such Duties as some of these in my Text upon them, will readily excuse themselves, and pretend that this Charge belongs only to the Rich, and by these they understand only Persons of eminent Quality and vast Estates. And thus they easily shift off the Duty from themselves, and are very willing to quit the Character of being rich, when the Title is like to become chargeable, and the Statutes of Heaven have lay'd such a Tax of Charity upon it. But such must not think to escape so easily the Reach of this

this Charge. For to be rich being only a comparative Title, we may justly extend it to all, that besides what is not only barely and absolutely necessary, but even convenient for Persons in their Rank and Station in the World, have something to spare, be it more or less, which they are capable of laying out in doing Good. 'Tis true indeed that the Degrees of Men's Liberality must bear Proportion to the Measure of what they can spare from all necessary and convenient Expenses; to whom much or little is committed (which after all we are allow'd to lay out in providing for our selves and ours, we have yet remaining as a Superplus) of them will be the more or less required. (As I shall have Occasion to shew more fully afterwards.) And truly when we consider, how much a great many among us go above their Rank and Condition in the Costliness of their Habit, their Furniture, and their way of Living, we may justly infer, That if those Expenses were duly regulated, they would so far be rich as to be in a Capacity of doing Good, and consequently that they do come within the Reach of this Charge in my Text. 'Tis not so much for want of Riches that they are not liberal, but because they mispend that on Superfluities that should be redeem'd for this excellent Purpose.

Having thus far consider'd to whom this Advice is address'd, I proceed to consider,

II. By whom this Advice is to be given? &c. And,

III. Under what Notion is it to be given?

I put these two Queries together, because I would conjoin them in the Answer.

Answer, The Advice is to be given by Timothy. And consequently every Christian Pastor, every authorized Dispenser of the Gospel, is both warranted and oblig'd to urge these Duties on all those under their Charge that are rich in this World. Nay, the Apostle gives this Instruction to Timothy who was but a young Preacher, and whom the Apostle on that very account thought it needful to caution his Flock against despising, 1 Tim. iv. 12. And even this young Timothy is not only empower'd to advise the Rich to these Duties, but to deliver his Advice by way of solemn Charge, *παρὰ βύλλας*, q. d. earnestly admonish them, vehemently urge them to the following Duties. The Apostle seems here aware of the usual Temper of the Rich; both that the Duties themselves are such as they are difficultly perswaded to comply with, and that they in their Vanity and Pride expect that all others should address themselves to them with great Ceremony and Respect, especially when they come to them on so unwelcome an Errand as that of recommending to them the Exercise of their Liberality and Charity. Those they reckon ought to treat them with very soft Words, and appear very modest and shy who apply themselves to them on that Subject. They must come to them in the Language of Supplicants, or at most propose what they have to say by way of humble Advice and Intreaty, if they expect to prevail with them. And therefore it may seem at first View, as if the Apostle had not given Timothy prudent Advice and Instructions how to deal with them. But if we examine the matter more narrowly, we shall find that the Apostle's Expressions in his Direction to Timothy are very emphatical and well weigh'd, q. d. I foresee these Duties are such as rich Persons do not love to hear much of; therefore be the more warm and earnest in pressing them thereto. And whereas that Duty of Liberality is what they are prone to mistake as if it were a Matter of Indifferency, a meer Counsel, which tho' it may be commendable for them to take, yet there is no Sin or Danger in neglecting; on the contrary, charge it upon their Consciences as their indispensable Duty, and with all ministerial Authority urge them to the Performance of it. And indeed we are abundantly warranted to use this Freedom and Plainness with the Rich, not only by the Authority of this great Apostle, but by the Authority of God himself, whose Messengers we are, and whose Orders and Commands we must deliver to the Rich as well as to the Poor, the one being as truly the Subjects of God as the other.

And having in these Particulars shewn, To whom I am authorized to deliver this Charge, and what clear Warrant I have for it, I proceed,

IV. To the main Thing, viz. The Charge it self, viz. That they be not high-minded, &c.

And in this Charge there are some Duties to be urg'd upon them, that more immediately concern themselves and the inward Actings of their own Souls; there are others which more directly refer to others, especially their indigent Brethren.

First, There are some Duties that I must urge on the Rich that more immediately concern themselves and the inward Actings of their own Souls.

And those are two:

I. That they be not high-minded.

II. That they trust not in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, &c.

I. I Would apply my self to the Rich with this Charge, that they be not high-minded, &c. *μη ὑψηλοφρονεῖν*.

And sure we cannot imagine any Caution more necessary to them than this. There is nothing the Generality of Men are more prone to value themselves upon than their external Condition. Their Minds swell with their Estates, and they are prone to look on every Accession to their Riches as an Addition to their Merit and Value in the World. No sooner do they in this Point stand upon higher Ground than others, but they quickly regard them as their Inferiors, and look down upon them with a haughty Disdain. And how readily does this Pride of their Hearts discover it self, in taking State upon them, keeping others at a great Distance, and affecting to distinguish themselves from them by the Luxury of their Garb, of their Houses and Furniture, of their Table and Expenses. They are prone to entertain over-weening Thoughts of themselves on the account of the Figure they make, and the Pomp and Splendor they live in. 'Tis very hard to keep their Minds humble and low, when their Condition is exalted and flourishing.

Let me then enforce this Caution upon all of you that are rich, that you be not high-minded.

And there are various Considerations I may offer to enforce this Caution, which I shall but briefly suggest.

1. Consider, That you owe this Difference in your external Condition from that of others to the meer good Pleasure of God.

Some boast of the Advantages of their Birth and Descent, but the Scripture tells us, That God has made all Nations of one Blood. And we are sure that all come alike naked into this World. And if either thine Ancestors have acquir'd an Estate that is entail'd on thee, or thou hast acquir'd it thy self, they or thou owe the Success of their Endeavours to his Blessing, who alone gives Power to get Wealth, Deut. viii. 18. And if thou ascribest that to thy Power or Skill, which is the Effect of God's distinguishing Favour, thou dost but betray thine Ignorance and Ingratitude in thus sacrificing to thy own Net, and burning Incense to thy own Drag; see Deut. viii. 17, 18. So that I may reason in reference to those that are puffed up with these Blessings of God's common Providence, as the Apostle does with reference to more excellent Gifts, Who makes thee to differ from another? And what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, Why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not receiv'd it? 1 Cor. iv. 6, 7.

2. Consider, That Riches imply no real intrinsick Worth in them that possess them.

The Scripture tells us, That Riches are not always to Men of Understanding, many owing their Acquisition of them far more to Time and Chance, than to any peculiar Wisdom or Policy, Eccles. ix. 11. An Ass may be loaded with golden Trappings. And a rotten Post may be richly gilded. Many a brutish Sensualist is cloth'd in Purple and fine Linnen, and fares sumptuously every Day, while a pious Lazarus stands begging at the Door, Luke xvi. 19, 20. That is a very poor and contemptible Honour that a Man borrows from his gay Cloaths and gold Ring,

Ring, or from his Lands and Possessions, when he has no noble God-like Endowments or Qualities to enrich and adorn his Soul. Why then shouldst thou look down with a proud Contempt on all that are below thee in Estate and Wealth, when perhaps there are thousands of them that far more excel thee in all truly valuable Excellencies, especially in those inestimable Treasures of Wisdom and Holiness? Why shouldst thou be exalted and puff'd up on the Account of that, which does not render thee one jot the more acceptable to God, or the more valuable in the Esteem of any wise and considerate Man? Shall any of us be proud of being rich when the Son of God condescended to become so poor that he had not where to lay his Head? In a word, Riches are but adventitious things, and are often the Possession of the vilest of Men; and nothing can argue greater Ignorance of real Worth; nay, nothing can be a more suspicious Sign that we want it, than to be high-minded on the Account of them. Let the Rich then learn to undervalue this small Advantage they have above the Poor, (who perhaps may have greater Advantages of another and better kind) and according to the Apostle's Instruction elsewhere, instead of minding high things, condescend to Men of low Estate, Rom. xii. 16.

3. Consider, That your Riches instead of puffing you up with Pride, should rather inspire you with Humility and awful Fear.

What shall we be high minded because we have a greater Number of Talents committed to us, and consequently a more awful and strict Account to give up than others? Shall we be proud because our Temptations to Sin, and our Diversions from Holiness are stronger, and our Salvation more difficult and improbable than that of others? Shall we be proud to be found among the Number of those of whom the Scripture tells us, That so few comparatively are call'd to be rich in Faith, and Heirs of Heaven? 1 Cor. i. 26. compar'd with James ii. 5. Or rather should not the Consideration hereof make us tremble at the Apprehensions of the greater Hazard that our Souls and our everlasting Concerns are in?

4. Once more let us consider, How soon this Distinction of Rich and Poor will cease for ever. And shall we be proud of those Treasures that we enjoy in this World, that can carry none of them out of it? Shall we despise those our poor Brethren now with whom Death will so soon level us, and lay our Heads as low as theirs? Shall we affect to keep those at a great Distance from us here, who shall ere long stand on equal Terms with us at the Bar of God? And who are even, here as truly ennobled by his Grace, and interested in his Favour, and entitled to his Kingdom as we our selves profess, or hope to be? Divine Love should bring those to a greater Equality in point of Affection and Respect, who are equal in all spiritual Privileges and heavenly Hopes. But,

II. I come to the next Branch of this Charge to the Rich, viz. That you trust not in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy.

We may be said to trust in that, which we chiefly depend on for our Welfare and Happiness. And the Rich we know, because their Wealth procures them most of the desirable Accommodations of this Life, are very prone to idolize it, and to think that they have sufficiently provided for their own Happiness, when they have laid up a plentiful Fund of this kind. When their Barns or their Coffers are full, they are then ready to say with the rich Man in the Gospel, Soul, take thine Ease, eat, drink, and be merry, for thou hast Goods laid up for many Years, Luke xii. 19. Thus they do (as Job speaks, Job xxxi. 24, 25.) make Gold their Hope, and fine Gold their Confidence; they rejoice because their Wealth is great, and because their Hand has gotten much. And alas while their worldly Prosperity continues, how prone are they to forget and neglect the blessed God! How little do they regard his Favour, and place their entire Dependence thereon for their present and eternal Welfare! How careless and neg-

ligent are they in seeking the Kingdom of God, and in laying up incorruptible Treasures there! How willing to take up with their Portion in this Life, and how cold in their Desires and Pursuit of an unseen and future Happiness!

But let me caution you against this inexcusable Folly. Trust not in uncertain Riches, but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy. Place all your Hopes of solid Happiness both here and hereafter on God alone as the true Spring of it. Let him be to your Souls the only Centre of their Contentment and Rest; and to that purpose I shall only offer these two Arguments to your serious Thoughts.

1. Consider, That even your present Happiness and Contentment in this World depends more on the Favour of God, than upon any earthly Store.

So that if you look'd no farther than this World, it were great Folly to depend on your Riches for that Satisfaction that God only can give. Could you secure the continued Possession of your Wealth as long as you live, yet that would no way secure your inward Contentment and Happiness. You may have a rich Affluence of temporal Blessings with a secret Curse that will blast all the real Comfort of them. Your full Cup may, by the Providence of God, be mix'd with many bitter Ingredients. A righteous God may visit you with those bodily Afflictions that will quickly spoil the Pleasure of all your Enjoyments. And you'll find that a Bed of Down will give but little Ease under violent and racking Pains. Or you may meet with those Disappointments and Crosses from your Relations that will rob you of that Satisfaction you might otherwise take in these Enjoyments. Or you may, by God's Judgment upon you for your idolizing your Riches, be given up to that great Evil that Solomon speaks of, i. e. Of having Riches, and Wealth, and Honour, and yet not have Power to eat thereof, but to leave it to Strangers to eat thereof, Eccles. vi. 1, 2. You may by a strange Curse even deny your selves the comfortable Conveniences of Life thro' an unaccountable Fear of lessening your Store, and almost starve in the midst of Plenty. 'Tis God that not only gives Riches, but a Power to eat thereof, and to take your Portion, and to rejoice in your Labour. This (saith the wise Man, Eccles. v. 19.) is the Gift of God.

But besides this, alas you have no Security for the Continuance of your Wealth it self, which you are so apt to lay the Stress of your Hopes for present Happiness upon. You trust in uncertain Riches, in that deceitful Mammon that so often deludes the Expectations of its Idolatrous Votaries. You forsake God, the Fountain of Living Waters, and have Recourse for your Supply to broken Cisterns. For really the Favour of the living God is to the poorest Saint a far better Security for all the needful Provisions of this Life, than the largest Possessions, or fullest Coffers are to the rich Worldling. For earthly Riches are but fugitive things, which when we think we grasp the fastest, make to themselves Wings, and flee away to new Owners. And to trust in them is to set our Hearts upon that which is not. Those Treasures which fill thy Chests may soon become the Prey of the secret Thief or the open Plunderer. Thy rich Garments are such as the Moth will consume. Thy stately Houses are not Proof against the Violence of Fire that may quickly turn them into Ashes. Nay, thou hast no Security of thy Lands themselves, unless thou couldst secure thy self from the open Violence of War, or from the no less dangerous Violence of unjust and corrupt Judges. We have often seen great Estates prove the Occasion of their Owner's Ruin, by exposing them to the Envy of powerful Oppressors. He that has the Favour of the living God to depend on for his present Subsistence and Support, has a firm Foundation of his Trust; he has a Fund to go to that can never be exhausted, a Spring that can never be drawn dry. He can either bless those that thus depend on him with a rich Affluence of worldly Possessions, or can make that little they enjoy far better to them than the Riches of many Wicked, Psal. xxxvii. 16.

Whereas

Whereas if we *trust in these uncertain Riches* to the Neglect of God, he whose Bounty now gives us all things richly to enjoy, may in just Displeasure blast that *Wealth* that is the Prop of our vain Confidence; he may cause that *Gourd* to wither under which we sit with such Contentment, and convince us by woful Experience, that we held all our Possessions by the Tenure of his abused Goodness, who may justly take away what we so unjustly idolize. But,

2. Consider, *How unfit those Riches are to be the Objects of your Trust and Hope, that can signify nothing to the securing your future Happiness.*

And indeed nothing can be more amazing and unaccountable than the Folly of miserable Worldlings, who think they have made sufficient Provision for their Happiness, when they have acquir'd a large Estate, or laid up a rich Stock and Store. Alas Man! Art thou so vain as to hope that thou shalt live here for ever? Or dost thou expect to carry thy *Lands* or thy *Treasures* with thee to an unknown eternal World? Canst thou transmit them by *Bills of Exchange* into those invisible and distant Regions? Or couldst thou do it, what would those signify to the Relief of thy separated Soul, that has now no Occasion for *Meat* and *Drink*, no Capacity to enjoy *sensual Pleasures* and *Delights*? Would all thy *Treasures* signify any thing to purchase the heavenly Inheritance, or to bribe the Justice of a Sin-avenging God, or even procure one Drop of *Water* to cool thy (inflamed) *Tongue*? Could they contribute in the least to assuage the Horrors of an enraged Conscience, or to give thee any Ease from the Gnawings of the immortal Worm, and from the Violence of the unquenchable Fire? Alas, thou canst not but know, that all these thy present Possessions must be left behind; thy Soul must launch out naked into an unseen Eternity, where *Gold* and *Silver* are of no Price. And there if thy past *Riches* could yield thee any Comfort or Relief, 'tis not that part of them which thou hast laid up, but that which thou hast laid out for God; 'tis not that Portion of thy Substance which thou hast left behind, but that which thou hast honour'd God with, by expending it for him.

And this should fully convince all of us, that there is none proper to be the Object of our Trust and Hope for solid Happiness but the living God. He that has chosen God for his Portion has indeed made a solid Provision for being blessed for ever; he has chosen that better Part that shall never be taken from him, Luke x. 42. He has secur'd an indefeasible and incorruptible Inheritance, when all earthly Possessions must be left behind; he has eternal Mansions prepared for him, when he must dislodge out of this earthly Habitation; nay, he has a House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens, for the Reception of his immortal Spirit, when this earthly Tabernacle shall be dissolv'd, when this House of Clay shall moulder into that Dust in which its Foundation was laid: So that well might the Psalmist when he had pronounc'd that People happy that enjoy'd a large Measure of temporal Prosperity, add by way of just Corrective, *Happy is the People whose God is the Lord*, Psal. cxliv. 15. That Living God can be the over-flowing eternal Spring of Life, and Light of Joy and Felicity to us, when all earthly Riches shall be either dead to us or we to them. O let us not then trust in uncertain Riches, but in that living God, who can give us all things richly to enjoy here, if it be best for us; and in the final Fruition of whom we shall enjoy all the Good we can desire or partake of. I come then,

Secondly, To consider that part of the Charge here given to the Rich that refers to others, viz, *That they shou'd do good, be rich in good Works, ready to distribute, and willing to communicate, and this in order to their laying in Store a good Foundation against the Time to come, and their laying hold on Eternal Life.*

This last Clause, I shall only consider, as an Argument and Motive to enforce the Charge, for so it seems chiefly intended by the Apostle here.

For the Charge it self, viz. *To do good, to be rich in good Works, to be ready to distribute, and willing to communicate,*

it imports a Duty that needs little to be explain'd to the Rich, tho' it greatly needs to be enforc'd upon their Consciences.

You can none of you be ignorant what the Apostle does in these Words require. Every one knows that the good Works which the Apostle enjoins we shou'd be rich in, are such wherein our Riches may be serviceable to promote the Welfare of the Bodies or the Souls of Men.

As to the Welfare of Men's Souls, 'tis an excellent Work to encourage the Gospel, to promote the Diffusion of that saving Light to the dark Corners of the Land, to support those that labour therein from sinking Discouragements and pressing Necessities; to distribute Bibles and other Books of Instruction and Devotion among the Poor that have either no Money to buy them, or perhaps no Heart to lay out that way what they can ill spare out of the small pittance they have to subsist upon. And indeed our Blessed Saviour intimates to us of how valuable account such Works as these are in his Eye, when he tells us, that he that receives (i. e. entertains, supports, and encourages) a Prophet in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward. Where he not only intimates, that the Reward of a faithful Prophet (i. e. of one that is industrious and wise to win Souls and to turn many to Righteousness) shall be great, but that those who thus contribute towards the success of his Labours shall as it were be entitled to all his good Works, and share in the glorious Reward of them, see Matth. x. 41.

As to the Bodies of Men, I need not tell you how serviceable your Riches may be to promote the temporal Welfare of your indigent Brethren; you have many ways of doing them good; 'tis a God-like Work to be a Father to the Fatherless, and a Protector to desolate Widows; To feed the Hungry and cloth the Naked, to relieve the pressing Necessities of those that are reduc'd to extream Straits; to buoy up a declining pious Family, and by seasonable Succour prevent their sinking into pinching Necessities; to furnish those with Advantages for being brought up to live by their own Industry, who are otherwise like to be expos'd thro' Idleness and Poverty to all manner of grievous Temptations. We can none of us want manifold Opportunities for such good Works as these if we would either seek for them, or lay hold of them, when they are offer'd to us. For the Wisdom of the great God (who could have levell'd the World, and given every Man an equal Portion) has therefore seen meet to permit so great a Difference in Mens external Condition, as that of the Rich and the Poor, in part for this very end, that as Men's Poverty is a fit Occasion for the Exercise of many particular Graces (such as strict Honesty and Truth under the Temptation of pinching Want, Submission to the Divine Will by Contentment with their lower Condition, and chearfully stooping to the Duties of it, Dependance on the Care of God when they have no visible Fund to rely on for their daily Bread, &c.) So on the other hand, the Riches that others enjoy are a fit occasion for their Exercise of that Excellent and God-like Disposition of Universal Goodness. Such are capable of a very noble Imitation of that Blessed Being, by becoming Benefactors to Mankind, and publick Blessings in the World. Such have a great Advantage for that most divine and delightful Work of doing Good. And 'tis on that Account chiefly that our Saviour tells us, *'Tis a more blessed thing to give than to receive*, Acts xx. 35.

Having thus briefly suggested what God does expect from you that are rich, I now proceed to enforce this solemn Charge upon your Consciences, and to that end shall only lay before you the following Considerations.

1. Consider, *That you are but Stewards of your Riches; that the blessed God, the great Proprietor, has order'd you thus laying them out; that you cannot refuse it without rendering the Account you must give to him very terrible.*

I join these together.

Consider, I say, *That you are but Stewards of the Riches*

Riches you possess, but God is the sovereign Owner and Proprietor of them. You have only a subordinate Right and Interest in them; they are his Corn and his Wine, his Silver and Gold; they are Talents that he puts into your Hands, which you are not allow'd to dispose of at your Pleasure and Will, but according to his Orders and Instructions.

And here you have his positive Orders and Instructions in my Text. We are authorized in God's Name to charge you, that you honour him with your Substance, that according to the Number of Talents of this kind committed to you, you lay them out in doing Good; that you be rich in good Works, and ready to distribute, and willing to communicate.

I know indeed there is some Difficulty in applying this general Rule to particular Cases, and in stating the Measure and Proportion of what every rich Man ought to lay out. For, indeed, there is so vast a Difference in the particular Circumstances of Persons with reference to their Families and Relations, their Station and Place in the World, &c. that it were perhaps next to impossible to lay down any Rules that will reach and accurately determine every Man's Quota and Proportion. For tho' we read of pious Jacob's vowing to give back to God the tenth part of all he had, Gen. xxviii. 22. Yet doubtless that Proportion is on the one hand more than some can spare that have numerous Families; and on the other, far less than others ought really to give, who have comparatively little Charge. And perhaps the Wisdom of God has therefore contented it self with such general Commands of doing Good, without descending to any particular Rules for deciding every Man's Rate and Quota, because he would hereby try the Ingenuity of our Disposition. God loves a cheerful Giver, and regards more the inward Disposition and Affection of the Man, than the meer Gift it self. Were every rich Man told how much he must give, what he gives would look rather like an Act of Necessity than a matter of Choice and a free Will-offering, which he is prompted to by those ingenuous Principles of Love to God, and Love to Men. Whereas these general Commands, the Application whereof is left to every rich Man's Conscience, are a proper Test and Tryal of his inward Disposition, how far such God-like Love prevails and reigns in his Heart. For according to the Measure of that will the Measure of his Bounty usually be. The liberal Man (he that is so in his Heart) will devise liberal things. And when his Heart is enlarg'd with Goodness, there is no Fear of his being strait-handed according to his real Ability.

O let me then add, That if you follow not these positive Orders and Instructions of God in laying out your Riches, your Account of them will be dreadful and terrible. Alas, some I fear do with this particular Talent just as the slothful Man did with his, that buried it in the Earth, and thought he gave a fair Account of it when he could say, Master, here, take what is thy own. They think it enough that they have not spent their Substance in riotous Living, and like the Prodigal, thrown it away upon Harlots. Or at most they think that a few Pence or Shillings now and then dropt into the Pious Box will be enough for them, tho' they have many Hundreds a Year. Nay, some of them not so much as Children to leave it to. But such should know and consider, that this Account will not be accepted by God, who will censure him for a wicked Servant that has thus hid his Talent in a Napkin, or hoarded it in his Chest. He will not take a Widow's Mite at that Man's Hand, who might give liberally out of his Abundance. If a Man have Hundreds or Thousands a Year, and have himself no Occasion for expending the Fourth, Fifth, or the Sixth Part of it, can he expect it will be a good Account of the rest, that instead of laying it out in doing Good, he has (excepting some small and inconsiderable Pittance) lay'd it all up to make new Purchases, and to add Field to Field, as if he were ambitious to be placed alone in the Earth (as

the Prophet speaks of such covetous Persons, *Isaiah* v. 8.)

Perhaps such may quiet their Consciences by pretending their good Designs to leave something considerable at their Death to such good Uses. But they should consider, that this is but a sorry Argument that they either love God or trust him. How do those show that they love him, who will not honour him with their Substance while they can keep it themselves, and are then only willing to give it to him, when they can hold it no longer! How do these shew their Trust in him that dare not depend on his present Promises of rewarding their Liberality by increasing their Store, and will therefore never part with it out of their hands, while they are in a bare Possibility how remote soever of wanting it themselves! And I take it to be a just Observation founded on common Experience, that where such rich Persons refuse to honour God with their Substance during their Lives, he seldom allows them the Honour of disposing well of it at their Death. The fordid Miser's Bags do, by a just Providence, often fall into the Hand of a Prodigal, that quickly squanders upon the Lusts of the Flesh what the other hoarded up so long for no other Use than to feed the Lust of his Eye, which in this Sense was never satisfied with seeing. And O wretched and deplorable is that rich Man's Case, that has left that Wealth to be the pernicious Occasion of the Damnation of his Heirs, which he himself shall be damned too for refusing to lay it out for God. Do not think these Expressions harsh and strain'd; no, they are the naked Truth, and will appear to any Man to be so that shall consider how plainly our blessed Saviour has pass'd the terrible Doom of, Depart ye Cursed (on them) that have not fed the Hungry, nor cloath'd the Naked, &c. *Mat.* xxv. 41, &c.

And if those are like to give but a dreadful Account of their Riches that have thus hoarded them up, sure they will give no better, that have spent them upon their Lusts, and thrown them away upon their sensual Excesses. 'Twill be but a woful Reckoning to make when this is the short of it, so many Hundreds spent in Gluttony and Drunkenness, so many in Luxury and Pride, and superfluous Vanity, so much in Gaming, so much upon Harlots, and after all, nothing for the Honour of God, or at best a few Shillings or Pounds laid out to relieve the Poor, and perhaps that rather out of Ostentation and Pride than real Charity. But O that such would consider, this is no less than to turn those Riches God has given us, into Arms of Hostility against himself, this is to pervert his Gifts to the Dishonour of the Giver: This is to feed and nourish his Enemies at the Expence of his Bounty. And such may be sure, that as their Guilt is great, so will their Condemnation be aggravated. I know many will be ready to excuse their Scantiness in doing Good, by the Pretence of their numerous Families. And so far we must allow the Plea, that doubtless our Obligations to provide for them must be comply'd with; and 'tis what can be spar'd from thence that we should devote to God. But then on the other hand, I fear many Parents little consider, that the great God will not take it well at their Hands to prefer the unnecessary Grandeur of their Families to his own Glory and Interest in the World. They may best expect a Blessing on their Posterity when they leave them a Competency suitable to their Rank, and entail upon them those Blessings God has promis'd to the Race of the Merciful and Liberal; whereas they may reasonably fear, that if their Ambition to raise them above their Rank, tempt them to withhold from God, and from his Poor, what he has made their Due, it may be just with him to blast their proud Design, and to permit those excessive Portions they leave them to become a pernicious Snare to their Souls, and Sacrifice to their expensive Lusts. I think we may as truly say of Riches penuriously hoarded up, as well as of Estates unjustly gotten, that they are seldom durable, but are generally as prodigally

digally squandered away, as they were at first fardily amass'd together.

2. Consider, *That you have the greatest Encouragement to this Duty of doing Good, &c. from the Prospect of an unconceivably glorious Reward.*

Hereby you'll lay up for your selves in Store a good Foundation for the Time to come, and lay hold on eternal Life.

And methinks this is an Argument which the Wisdom of God suits to the Disposition of the Rich. They talk much of their Interest, and seem to express a great Regard to it in all their Transactions. And accordingly to allure them to so excellent a Duty, the blessed God recommends it from this very Consideration of Interest, assuring them they shall be no Losers at the Foot of the Account for all they lay out for him, but infinite Gainers in the Issue. They shall treasure up a good Foundation for themselves against the Time to come. (For so our Translators and others render *θεμέλιον*, according to its most obvious Signification). And according to this Sense of the Phrase, the Apostle seems to intimate, that as the Foundation is lay'd deep in the Earth, and usually hidden from View, from whence the Building and Superstructure rises very high and conspicuous, so from those Exercises of our divine Charity on Earth (which are often secret and conceal'd from common View, as our Saviour intimates they should ordinarily be, *Matt. vi. 1, 2, 3, &c.*) shall this glorious Reward of our future Felicity rise and spring up.

Other Expositors suppose that either *θεμέλιον* is by the Mistake of Expositors put for *κεφάλαιον*, or at least taken by the Apostle in that Sense; and so the Sense is plain, that by being rich in good Works, we should be solicitous to lay up hidden Treasures to be enjoy'd in a future Life when all our earthly Possessions shall fail us: According to our Saviour's Advice, *Luke xii. 33.*

Others tell us, that this Word was us'd by the Jews to signify *Tabula Contractus*; Bonds and Obligations. And so they suppose that the Apostle here considers God as by his own gracious Promise made Debtor to us, for all that we faithfully lay out for him, (he having told us, that *he that gives to the Poor lendeth to the Lord, and he will repay it*, *Prov. xix. 17.*) Accordingly the Apostle exhorts the Rich to manage a profitable Commerce with Heaven by their Wealth on Earth. To become God's Creditors, and make him their Debtor, treasuring up by their Liberality to his Interest and his poor Children, many Bonds and Obligations that shall in the Time to come (in the future State) be fully discharg'd to their unspeakable Advantage and Gain.

And truly, my Brethren, when I consider all the precious Promises which God has made to such as are rich in good Works, both relating to this Life (which I have not now time particularly to consider) and in reference to the future, which I am now speaking of, I must needs say, that here is a very proper and clear Test for the Tryal of your Faith. For if you believe these Promises, you must be unaccountably stupid, if they are not prevailing Incitements to this Duty. Where's thy Faith, Man, if thou art afraid of being a Loser, by thy liberal Charity? Nay, where's thy Regard to thy own Interest, if so amazing a Recompence will not draw out thine Heart and Hand? Merchants scruple not to lay out present Money for future profitable Returns upon good Security. Wilt thou not part with thy corruptible Treasures for the certain Prospect of incorruptible ones, with thy perishing Possessions, for an unfading Inheritance, with thy decaying Bags for such as never wax old, with the Wealth which Death will soon dispossess thee of, for that which will enrich thy Soul for ever? He that is not content to make this Bargain, either understands or considers not what Heaven and its endless Happiness means, or he does not believe God's Promises concerning the Reward of this Duty.

Only mistake not, as if our Alms cou'd entitle us to Heaven by way of Merit, when really in the most faithful Distribution of them we have only given back to God part of his own, according to his express Orders. Nay, think not that your bare eternal Liberality will entitle you to this Reward, unless it flows from the predominant Love of God and sincere Love of Men, and is accompanied with other Principles and Exercises of sincere and universal Holiness. 'Tis an awful Supposition the Apostle elsewhere makes of a Man's giving all his Goods to feed the Poor (i.e. out of Ostentation and Vain-glory) and yet wanting inward Charity, *1 Cor. xiii. 3.* But where our Liberality flows from right Principles, and is exercis'd with due Aims and Ends, we may comfortably expect, that it shall meet with so desirable a Recompence. Our Saviour himself has told us how high a Value he puts on these good Works, when he assigns them as the Reason of that joyful Doom he passes on the Righteous, *Matt. xxv. 34.* O let us then be rich in good Works now, as we would be rich in Faith and Divine Hope, and rich in the Possession and Enjoyment of Heavenly Treasures and Joys for ever!



S E R M O N VII.

THE

Internal EVIDENCE and PROOF of CHRISTIANITY.

1 John v. 10. *The first Clause.*

He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness (or Testimony) in himself. He that believeth not God hath made him a Liar, because he believes not the Record that God gave of his Son.

THE Apostle John, in the foregoing Verses, had been producing the Witnesses that do concur in attesting the grand Cause of Christianity.

What the Matter of their Testimony is, or what is the great Truth they are suppos'd to bear witness to, you have in the Verse following my Text, viz. *That God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.*

This Cause of Christianity the Apostle supposes to be confirm'd by three Witnesses in Heaven, and three on Earth. The Witnesses in Heaven, are, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost. The Witnesses on Earth, the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood. He mentions Three Witnesses both in Heaven and in Earth, perhaps in Allusion to that Maxim of the Law of Moses, *That in the Mouth of two or three Witnesses every Word should be established*, Deut. xvii. 6.

For the Witnesses in Heaven, viz. The Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit.

They do attest Jesus Christ to be the Son of God, in whom he has given us eternal Life.

The Father did it by his frequent Declarations by an audible Voice from Heaven. Such a Testimony he bare to him at his Baptism, Matt. iii. 17. *This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* The like Testimony he gave to him at his glorious Transfiguration, Matt. xvii. 5. The like Testimony he gave to him at the near Approach of his sufferings. See John xii. 28.

The Eternal Word attested the same Truth from Heaven.

And that not merely in his miraculous Operations on Earth, in which the Rays of his divine Perfections shone out thro' the Veil and Disguise of our Flesh which he had assumed; but chiefly in his glorious Appearances from Heaven. For he is here consider'd as one of the Witnesses residing there. And therefore I would refer this Testimony of the Eternal Word, to such remarkable Events as these; to his sensible Manifestation of himself to his dying Martyr Stephen, to whom he appear'd sitting at the right Hand of God, with all the resplendent Marks of truly divine Majesty and Glory, with which that excellent Saint was so transported, that he cries out in a Rapture of Faith and devout Affection, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*, Acts vii. 59. In the like sensible Manner he appear'd to Saul when a furious Persecutor, surrounding him with a glorious Light, and expostulating with him in that tender Language, *Saul, Saul, Why persecutest thou me?* See Acts ix. And so deep Impressions did this

heavenly Vision make upon him, that it conquer'd his Unbelief, and brought him to that submissive Frame as to cry out, *Lord, What wouldst thou have me to do?* Nay, a second Vision he had of our blessed Saviour while he was praying in the Temple, ordering him to depart from Jerusalem and to go to the Gentiles. See Acts xxii. 17, 18, &c. And some do not improbably suppose, that during that Trance he was wrapt up into the third Heaven, and had the Revelations and Visions which he mentions, 2 Cor. xii. 1.

And to add no more, he appear'd to this very Apostle when an Exile in the Isle of Patmos, where John receiv'd that Revelation immediately from him, which he deliver'd to the Church: And accordingly as himself there speaks, *Bare record of the Word of God, and of the Testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all Things that he saw.* See Rev. i. 1, 2. and throughout the Chapter.

Nay, another Vision of him he had mention'd, Rev. v. 6. And a third Vision at Chap. xiv. 14. And a Fourth mention'd, Rev. xix. 11, 12. Where as he appear'd with the resplendent Glory, so he assum'd the Name of the Word of God, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords.

The Holy Ghost bare witness to the same Truth, by his miraculous Descent upon our blessed Saviour himself at his Baptism, Matt. iii. 26. upon whom he is said to descend like a Dove, i.e. not in the Form and Shape of a Dove, (as has been too generally but I think erroneously supposed) for then it should have been *ὡς περιστερά*, but rather he descended with a trembling and hovering Motion, as a Dove descends and lights upon a Place. 'Tis more probable that he appear'd in the Form of a bright Light or Fire (as he did on the Apostles) but only the Motion thereof was like that of a Dove. Upon which Descent our Lord Jesus is said to be full of the Holy Ghost, abundantly replenish'd with divine Wisdom and Light for the publishing his heavenly Doctrine.

And the same Testimony the Holy Spirit bare to the Son of God in its miraculous Descent upon the Apostles, when commission'd to go and disciple all Nations to him, and that according to our Saviour's express Promise and Prediction to them.

And of this glorious Testimony given to Christ in the extraordinary Gifts of his Holy Spirit, I have had some Time ago occasion to treat so largely, that I shall content my self with this brief mention of it here.

Besides these Three Witnesses in Heaven, there were Three on Earth, viz. the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood.

The Spirit, as distinguish'd from the Holy Spirit, seems to refer to those manifold Miracles which our blessed Saviour is said to perform or work by the Spirit, Matt. xii. 28. Whereas the Holy Spirit seems to refer to those extraordinary intellectual Gifts which the same divine Agent is the Author of. For tho' the Power of the divine Spirit did conspicuously appear in the Miracles wrought by Christ during his personal Ministry, and even the Disciples themselves were empower'd to work them, yet we read expressly, That the Holy Ghost was not given, because Jesus was not yet glorified, John vii. 39. Which plainly refers to those extraordinary intellectual Gifts which the Apostles receiv'd upon the miraculous Descent of the Holy Spirit upon them (mention'd, Acts ii. at the Beginning).

By the Water here, we may understand that Purity and Holiness, which not only shone in our Saviour's Doctrine and Life, but was the genuine Effect of that Doctrine on the Souls of all that sincerely embrac'd it, and of which accordingly they made a solemn Profession by Baptism, in their first Admission into the Number of his Disciples and Followers. The Jews themselves did from John's baptizing, and from Christ's doing so, (i. e. by his Disciples, who herein observ'd his Orders and Instructions) conclude, that the one or the other pretended to the Authority of the Messiah in whose Days they suppos'd, that an universal Baptism shou'd be administred. See John i. 25. Luke iii. 15. compar'd with Zach. xiii. 1. Ezek. xxxvi. 25. And therefore that eminent Purity which our Saviour enjoy'd by his Doctrine, and exemplify'd in his Life, and by external Baptism required in all his Disciples a solemn Profession of, was one eminent Witness to the Truth of his Pretensions to be the Son of God, and the promised Messiah and Saviour of the World, who came to save his People from their Sins, and to bless them, by turning them from their Iniquities, Matt. i. 21. Acts iii. 26.

The last Witness mention'd is the Blood.

By this, no doubt, we must understand his Blood as shed upon the Cross, when he there dy'd as our expiatory Sacrifice.

Now Christ by his Death it self gave a solemn Attestation to the Truth of that good Confession he had made before the Jewish Sanhedrim, of his being the Christ, the Son of the Blessed.

But especially his shedding that Blood to obtain the Remission of Sins; his professedly dying under the Notion of an expiatory Sacrifice; as the Lamb of God that shou'd bear and take away the Sin of the World, was so manifest an Accomplishment of all those famous Prophecies concerning the Messiah, that foretold his Sufferings and the procuring Cause of them, (such as Isaiah liii. throughout, Dan. ix. 24, 26, not to mention all the typical expiatory Sacrifices under the Law of which he was the great Antitype). That his Blood may be justly reckon'd among those Witnesses which here on Earth attested his being the Son of God, and the Author of eternal Life and Salvation.

And therefore from the clear Evidence which all these Witnesses give to this fundamental Article of our Holy Religion, the Apostle justly concludes, that if we receive the Witness or Testimony of Men, we should much more receive that divine Testimony which is far greater, and consequently more worthy of Belief. For this (q. d. this Evidence I have mention'd) is the Witness (or Testimony) that God hath testify'd of his Son. But besides all this external Evidence which is capable to convince Infidels themselves, if they brought an unprejudic'd Mind to the Search of divine Truth, he appeals to a new internal Evidence which every sincere Christian carries of this great Truth in his own Breast; He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness in himself, i. e. He can in and from himself, and from what he has experienc'd in his own Soul, attest this great Truth, That God hath given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son.

And this is the remarkable Passage which I design, by divine Assistance, to treat upon, viz.

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the Witness (or Testimony) in himself.

In speaking hereto, I shall consider,

I. What Witness or Testimony this is which the Apostle here speaks of.

II. How every true Christian may be said to have this Testimony in himself.

I. Let us consider, what Witness or Testimony this is of which the inspir'd Apostle here speaks.

Ans. We must here carefully distinguish between the Matter of this Testimony, or the Thing that is attested, and the Evidence or Proof of it.

1. As to the Matter of the Testimony or the Thing attested, 'tis mention'd in the Verse following my Text, That God has given to us eternal Life, and that this Life is in his Son, i. e. That God in his gracious Covenant, has made unto us a free Grant and Gift of eternal Life, and that this Life is in his Son as the Author and Spring of it; who procur'd it for us at the Expence of his Blood; who will, by his Royal Power, put us into the full Possession of it; and who, by his sanctifying Grace, does mould and frame us for it; and, as it were, sow the Seeds and Principles of it in our own Souls. Inasmuch as he that hath the Son (i. e. by a vital Union to him, as one of the living Members of his mystical Body) he hath Life, he has not only a Right and Title to this eternal Life, but he has it in primitiis; he carries about the Seed, the First-fruits, the Fore-taste and Earnest of it. So that we see, that the Gift and Grant is conditional, not made indefinitely to all, but only to such as believe on the Son of God; and are by such a sincere and practical Faith, brought into a vital Union to him. You see then the Record it self, viz. The free and unmerited Promise of eternal Life to all true Believers, even of that eternal Life which the Son of God is the Author of, purchasing it for us by the Price of his Blood, preparing us for it by the Efficacy of his Grace, and dispensing it to us by the Exercise of his Judicial Authority and his Royal Power. And this is a compendious Summary of the Gospel it self. And this is the Record or Testimony, μαρτυρία mention'd at the 11th Verse. But,

2. There is here to be consider'd the Evidence and Proof of the Matter that is here attested, (i. e. of this great and important Truth of the Christian Religion which I have mention'd under the former Head).

And 'tis concerning this latter that the Apostle must be understood in my Text. You know in the Testimony of a Witness we do not barely consider what he asserts, but what Evidence and Proof he produces to confirm the Truth of the Assertion. As in Matters of Fact, whether he himself was an Eye or Ear-witness of what he affirms to be done or spoken, or what Cause of Knowledge he has concerning it.

Now the Apostle does here suppose every true Believer to be himself a Witness in this grand Cause of Christianity, and to carry in himself a solid Evidence and Proof of this important and fundamental Truth thereof.

And therefore those plainly overlook the true Sense of the Original, who, by the Witness here, understand the Spirit himself; as if the Apostle had said, He that believes in the Son hath one of these three Witnesses in himself, viz. the Spirit. 'Tis indeed true, that the Holy Spirit dwells in every true Christian, and that he who has not the Spirit of Christ is none of his, Rom. viii. 9. 'Tis also true, that the peculiar Effects of the Holy Spirit, are the Evidence and Proof here design'd (as I shall more fully shew anon). But the Words are not ἐχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν, but τὴν μαρτυρίαν. Not the Witness, but the Testimony, i. e. The Evidence and Proof of the grand Truth here attested, viz. That God has given us eternal Life, &c. And this inward Evidence and Proof every true Christian has in himself, as a Confirmation of that external Evidence which the other Witnesses beforemention'd give in.

And this leads me to the main Enquiry, viz.

II. How every true Christian has this Testimony, (i. e. this Evidence and Proof) in himself? Or wherein that internal

internal Evidence and Proof lies, which every true Christian has in himself of this fundamental Article of Christianity?

Answer. In general, this internal Evidence is something distinct from, and super-added to, that external Evidence which is given in by these Witnesses mention'd before.

The Father's Testimony was given by an audible Voice from Heaven; the eternal Word's, by a visible glorious Appearance; the holy Spirit's, by those extraordinary Gifts that were very observable in all that were endu'd with them. And the like might be said of the other three Witnesses on Earth. But this Evidence and Proof depends on the inward Sensation of our own Souls; 'tis founded on our own Experience, and those divine Effects on our own Souls that are only immediately discernable by every true Believer himself.

Yet this Internal Evidence and Proof is very consonant and agreeable to that External Evidence which the foremention'd Witnesses are said to give. These Two different Testimonies do entirely and sweetly accord; they manifestly tend to confirm and corroborate each other.

But particularly, this inward Evidence and Proof which every true Christian has in himself, may be reduc'd to such Heads as these.

I. That inward and universal Holiness which his Soul is formed to, is a solid Evidence and Proof of this great Truth.

II. That inward Peace and Consolation that his Soul is replenish'd with, is a farther Evidence and Proof of it. And,

III. His Conquest over the World and vigorous joyful Aspiration to the endless Happiness of a better, is a farther Evidence and Proof of it.

Of these in their Order. And,

I. That inward and universal Holiness which the Soul of every true Christian is formed to, is a solid Evidence and Proof of this great Truth.

I here take that for granted which the Experience of all sincere Christians can attest, that there is a Renewing and Sanctifying Change in their Nature, by virtue whereof they are enabled concerning their former Conversation to put off the Old Man, with his corrupt Affections and Lusts, and put on the New, which is created after the Image of God in Righteousness and true Holiness. I here suppose it, that they are made Partakers of a Divine and God-like Nature, and have escap'd the Corruption that is in the World thro' Lust; that they are powerfully prompted and enabled to cleanse themselves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the fear of the Lord. See Eph. iv. 22, 23, &c. 1 Pet. ii. 4. 2 Cor. vii. 1.

Now that this Renovation and Sanctification of their Hearts and Lives is a solid Evidence and Proof of this great Truth, viz. That Jesus is the Son of God and Author of Eternal Life, will appear if we consider the following Particulars.

1. They are conscious, that this Renewing and Sanctifying Change is owing to the Doctrine of Christ as the external means of producing it.

2. They have just reason to conclude, that 'tis the Effect of a supernatural Power, even the gracious Influences of the Spirit of Christ.

3. From both these Particulars, they justly conclude, that he is the Son of God, and the Author of Eternal Life.

1. They are conscious, that this Renewing and Sanctifying Change is owing to the Doctrine of Christ as the external means of producing it.

They know, that all that Heavenly Wisdom and Light that shines in their Understandings, is deriv'd from that rich Treasury of Divine Wisdom and Knowledge, the Gospel of Christ. And all those Graces, those God-like Qualities, those amiable Lineaments of the Divine Image, those bright Resemblances of that infinitely glorious Being in his imitable Perfections, are the genuine Impression and Stamp of that Heavenly Doctrine which the Gospel contains. 'Tis that Grace

of God bringing Salvation that has taught them to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live godly, and soberly, and righteously in this present World, as becomes those that wait for the Blessed Hope, &c. 2 Tim. xi. 12, &c. They find by happy Experience, that 'tis the marvellous Discovery of the transcendent and matchless Love of God display'd to us in our Lord Jesus Christ, (the most glorious Gift, the brightest Image and Mirror of Divine Love) that has inflam'd their Souls with such a superlative Love to God, and brought them under the sweet and powerful Constraints of it. And these Ardours of Divine Love are the Height, the comprehensive Summary of all true Piety; and yet scarce ever nam'd or rank'd among the Vertues of the Pagan Moralists. So peculiar an Effect is Divine Love of Revealed Religion! Nay, 'tis this Gospel of Christ that has taught them to direct all their Actions to the Glory of God as their ultimate End; a Lesson which they would never have learn'd in the Schools of the Heathen Moralists. They are conscious, that that profound Humility which is so amiable a Grace, but so wholly unknown to the Masters of the Heathen Morality, is the genuine Product of this Divine Revelation. 'Tis the Gospel that by clearly discovering the peerless Majesty, the unspotted Purity and Holiness, and other adorable Perfections of the Divine Nature, and by representing to us our Meanness and Vileness, our Corruption and Guilt, has taught us such becoming Self-abasement before that infinitely great and holy Being. Nay, 'tis the Gospel that by discovering our lapsed and miserable State, and our entire Obligation to Divine Mercy and Grace for every Step of our Recovery from it, has taught us to ascribe all the Glory of our Salvation to God as the great Author of it. It has entirely silenc'd among true Christians any such proud Language as that which was so common among the best of Heathen Moralists, that we may owe our Riches to the Deity, but we have our Wisdom and Vertue from our selves.

A true Christian is conscious to himself, that 'tis the believing Contemplation of the infinite Love of God extended to himself, when a perverse Enemy and Rebel against him, that has engag'd him not only to love all those that bear his amiable Image, but to love his Enemies themselves. 'Tis this Gospel has taught him those difficult but noble and admirable Heights of God-like Love, to forgive the greatest of Injuries, and to overcome the Evil of others with his Good.

Nay, he is conscious, that the peculiar Motives which Christianity presents, have the most powerful Influence upon his Soul to excite him to this Universal Holiness of Heart and Life. He finds by happy Experience, that there is an admirable Virtue in his believing Meditations on the Cross of Christ, to prompt him in conformity to the great End of his Death, to crucify this Flesh with the Affections and Lusts thereof, nay, to crucify the World to him, and him to the World. He can from Christ's Dying for him, draw the strongest Arguments to live not to himself, but to him that died for him, and rose again. He can, from the Mercies of God in appointing his Son to be a Sin-Offering and Propitiation, draw the most powerful Persuatives to present his Body and Soul as a living holy Sacrifice to God, as conscious 'tis but a most reasonable Service, Rom. xii. 1. He feels the Efficacy of divine Love to constrain him to all ingenuous and chearful Obedience, and finds, by happy Experience, that to a Soul animated by that filial Affection to God, His Commandments are not grievous, his Yoke is easy, and his Burden light.

In a word, he is conscious to himself, that all the eminent Attainments in practical Religion and Holiness that he has ever reach'd to, are owing to the Precepts of the Gospel, as the great Directory of his Heart and Life; and that he derives the most persuasive Motives thereto from the peculiar Doctrines contain'd in that divine Revelation. And how solid an Evidence and Proof this

is of the great Truth here suppos'd to be attested, I shall have Occasion anon to shew.

I now add,
2. Every true Christian has just Reason to conclude, That this renewing sanctifying Change in his Soul is the Effect of a supernatural Power, even of the vital Influences of the Spirit of Christ.

We are conscious of our own woful Degeneracy and Corruption, of our natural Enmity and Disaffection to the holy Nature and Laws of God. We can our selves remember the Time when in our unregenerate State these divine Truths have been externally propos'd to us, and have made no such transforming Impressions on our Hearts and Lives. We do see many Thousands that attend on the Dispensation of the Gospel without having any such divine Effects produc'd on their own Souls. We see in many this renewing Change is so suddenly effected, as shews the Power by which it is produc'd to be supernatural and divine. For what less Power can so immediately quicken a dead Soul to spiritual and divine Life, transform a Brute or incarnate Fiend into an incarnate Angel? What less than divine Energy can so suddenly conquer all the obstinate Opposition of depraved Nature, and of the most inveterate sinful Habits, and turn a disobedient Sinner to the Wisdom of the Just, can pull down the strong Holds of Sin, and captivate every high Thought to the Obedience of Faith? What less than a supernatural Vertue can as it were in a Moment make all the Fruits of Paradise appear in a barren Soil, where nothing but Irreligion and Profaneness, and the like pernicious Weeds sprung up before? These are plain Evidences that there is a quickning Energy and Vertue that accompanies the Dispensation of the Gospel to such Souls, on whom so glorious Effects are so suddenly produc'd. Nay, where the Change seems to be more gradual; yet we all find, that in our progressive Sanctification we do depend on such vital Influences from above for our Proficiency in divine Light and Life. We find by Experience the same divine Truths are at some times represented to our Minds with clearer Light and Evidence than at others, and do at some times more deeply affect and warm our Hearts, and make stronger Impressions than at others. All this is so consonant to what the Gospel declares to us concerning the Necessity of the inward Operations of the Holy Spirit to renew our Natures, and to carry on the great Work of our Sanctification, and concerning the arbitrary Freedom of that Divine Agent in his gracious Operations (whom our Saviour so justly compares to the Wind that blows where it lists, &c. John iii.) as may greatly confirm us in the Perswasion, that this glorious Change produc'd in us is the Effect of the supernatural and efficacious Grace of the Holy Spirit.

Now if we compare both these Heads together, we may,

3dly, From hence justly conclude, That Jesus Christ is the Son of God, in whom he has given us eternal Life.

We may hence justly conclude, That Jesus Christ is the Son of God. For since he claim'd that glorious Character, and under that Character requires our Belief of his Heavenly Doctrine, had his Pretensions been false, can we ever imagine that the blessed God would ever have so remarkably countenanc'd and own'd so vile an Impostor, as to make his Doctrine the successful Means, not only of so glorious a Change in the World as the recovering so many Gentile Nations from their Polytheism and Idolatry to the pure Worship of the one true God, but also the blessed Instrument of regenerating so many Millions of Souls, and reinstating his own amiable Image upon them. Would the God of perfect Truth and Holiness have ever blest'd a meer Delusion and Lye to produce the most Glorious and God-like Effects that ever were in the World? Must not that Doctrine be from Heaven that so apparently tends to advance the Glory of God, to restore his just Kingdom and Empire in the Souls of Men, to recover them to so admirable a Conformity to his own Nature and Will, to raise them to that Holiness that was once the Beauty

and Ornament of their Nature? Must not that Doctrine be from God which he accompanies with his supernatural Energy and Power in producing these blessed Effects? Would he so far own a vile Deceiver that falsely pretends to be his only begotten Son, as to entrust him with the Communication of this Spirit of Divine Light and Life to all his Members and Followers? No, we have all possible Reason to believe, that he is the Son of God, the essential Wisdom and Word who came from the Bosom of the Father to reveal his Will, when we find in our own Souls such divine Fruits of his heavenly Doctrine, and of that sanctifying Grace that gives it such a transforming Power upon them.

Nay, we may hence justly conclude, That God has given us eternal Life in him, because this universal Holiness of Heart and Life is the very Seed and Principle of it. 'Tis this Purity of Heart that disposes us for the beatifick Vision of God. 'Tis this blessed Conformity of our Nature and Wills to his that prepares us for the Fulness of Joy that is in his (immediate) Presence, and the Rivers of Pleasure that flow at his right Hand for evermore. 'Tis this suits us for the Society and Converse of Angels, and the perfected Spirits of the Just, and con-naturalizes our Souls to their Employments and Exercises, their Entertainments and Joys. 'Tis this fits us to become the blessed Inhabitants of the Regions above, where perfect Light and Love, and spotless Purity, for ever reign.

And can we think that the blessed God will ever frustrate our Hopes of eternal Life, when he has not only sent so glorious a Messenger as his incarnate Son to reveal it, but has been at such Pains by the continued Operations of his Spirit and Grace to render us meet for it? Has he laid the Foundation, and rais'd the Superstructure, and will he not lay the Top-stone? Has he given us the first Fruits, and will he not give us the full Harvest? Has he fram'd us for, and will he not bring us to that State of glorious Immortality? Sure if God in his inferior Works of Nature do nothing in vain, much less will he in this illustrious Work of his supernatural Grace. But,

II. That inward Peace and Consolation that the Soul of every true Christian is replenish'd with, is a farther Evidence and Proof of this great Truth.

And this will appear, if we consider,

1. That this inward Peace and Consolation is an Effect that no other Principles could produce but those contain'd in the Gospel.

2. That this inward Peace and Consolation is no Fancy and Delusion, but a well-grounded Perswasion.

3. From both these we may draw the Conclusion that is here to be attested.

I shall speak to these Heads in their Order. And,

1. This inward Peace and Consolation is an Effect that no other Principles can produce but those which the Gospel of Christ contains.

By this inward Peace, I mean that Peace of Conscience that arises from the clear Perswasion of our Peace with God; that inward Calm and Serenity of Soul, that holy Confidence towards God which arises from the comfortable Perswasion that he is our reconciled Father; that all our Iniquities are forgiven, all our Guilt cancell'd; that our Persons are justify'd and accepted; and, in a word, that we are the Objects of his peculiar Favour and Love.

Now this is a blessed Effect that no other Principles but those of the Gospel can produce.

Though the Light of Nature might be suppos'd to dictate something concerning the Placability of the divine Nature from the Exercise of his Goodness and Patience, yet it could give us no satisfying Assurance of his pardoning Mercy. Much less could it declare to us the Freeness and Fulness, and Extent of his pardoning Mercy, or upon what Terms he would dispense it. All these depending on the free Pleasure and good Will of God, could only be discover'd by divine Revelation. And least of all could the Light of Nature point out to us any Expedient or Means how the Exercise of God's pardoning

pardonning Mercy might be reconcil'd with the Honour of his Government, and the Glory of his vindictive Justice.

The Heathens themselves had some Notices of the vindictive Justice of God, and of the Demerit of Sin that expos'd us to it. And this led them to endeavour the appeasing his Vengeance by such a Multitude of expiatory Sacrifices, and so manifold Rites of Purgation. But Reason it self did suggest to the wise and considerate Part of them, that there was no sufficient Vertue in those Sacrifices to expiate the real Guilt of Sin, that the Life of a sacrificed Brute was no Equivalent, no valuable Consideration to offended Justice for the forfeited Life of a guilty Offender. That their external Purifications could not take away the deep Stains of heinous Guilt. And since they had no Promise of Pardon, no Notice of the Extent of pardonning Mercy, no Intimation of the Terms of it, no Discovery of the Way of obtaining it, they could have no solid Ground for any firm and confident Perswasion of it. And how uncomfortable must the Case of a guilty Sinner be, when on the one hand he is under deep Convictions of heinous Guilt, and under fearful Apprehensions of avenging Justice; and yet on the other, under such a woful Uncertainty about the Possibility or the Means of obtaining divine Forgiveness.

But here the Gospel of Christ alone gives every penitent Sinner effectual Relief against his guilty Fears. He here sees the clearest and fullest Promises of entire Forgiveness and gracious Acceptance upon his penitent Return to an offended Father thro' the Mediation of his incarnate Son: Here he beholds the marvellous Contrivance of divine Wisdom and Grace for according the seemingly divided Interests of his Justice and Mercy. Here he discerns a Sacrifice of infinite Value, capable to expiate the Guilt of Sin, which the Blood of Bulls and Goats could never do. Here he beholds such a Declaration of the Righteousness of God made, as may make it appear, That he is just when he is the gracious Justifier of those that believe in his Son. Here he sees a perfect Obedience, capable to repair the Honour of God's injur'd Law, to procure the Gift of eternal Life, and to recommend our sincere tho' imperfect Services to the divine Acceptance and Reward. In a word, here his Conscience sees a solid Ground to rest upon, in its comfortable Apprehensions of free Pardon and Justification by an offended but reconcileable God, even a sure Promise of it founded upon a most valuable Consideration, that renders it every way consistent with the Honour of God's violated Law, the Rights of his injur'd Government, and the Glory of his incensed Justice. And no other Principles than these can give an alarmed Conscience any such solid Support, or effectually allay all the Storms of its guilty Fears.

And I add,

2. That this inward Peace and Consolation of a true Christian is no delusive Fancy, but a solid and well-grounded Perswasion.

And I think the Truth of this will sufficiently appear, if we consider such things as these.

He does actually find, that this blessed Peace does scatter all his guilty Fears, does calm and quiet his once perplexed Thoughts, is the Spring of sweet Consolation and Joy in his Soul, and does yield far more of refreshing Delight to it, than all the Increase of Corn and Wine, all Affluence of earthly Enjoyments could do.

Again, he is conscious that this Perswasion of his Pardon and Peace with God does not spring from any injurious Apprehensions of his adorable Perfections. He entertains no Notions of his boundless Mercy but what are every way consistent with the highest Conceptions of his spotless Purity, his inflexible Justice, his Zeal for maintaining his sovereign Authority, and keeping up the due Reverence of his Laws.

Accordingly he finds, that this Perswasion of pardonning Mercy gives him no Encouragement to offend; he abhors the Thought of continuing in Sin that Grace may abound. On the contrary, the more freely he is forgiven, he is the more fearful to offend. The costly Method of his Redemption engages him to pass the Time of his sojourning here in Fear, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. Nay, the Sense of pardonning Mercy melts his Soul into a more ingenuous relenting Frame; it convinces him of his Obligation to devote that Life to the Glory and Service of God, which his Grace releases from the Bonds of eternal Death, and powerfully prompts him to it. It makes him the more resolv'd not to return to Folly when God has thus spoken Peace to him. And when he feels by blessed Experience, that his Perswasion of pardonning Mercy makes such ingenuous Impressions upon his Soul as these, he cannot doubt but 'tis real and well-grounded, and not the Effect of any self-flattering Delusion. He cannot but regard this Diffusion of the Love of God in his Soul (in the delightful Sense and Relish of it) as the genuine Effect of that truly divine Comforter the Holy Spirit.

Now,

3. From both these he justly concludes, That God has given us eternal Life in his Son.

For he may well argue, that God would never so far countenance the Promises that were falsely made in his Name by a vile Impostor, as by these to produce so excellent and blessed an Effect in his own Soul, as this Peace that passes all Understanding. And since he is sure that this inward Peace is a truly divine Effect, and the Result of a well-grounded Perswasion, he may well infer, That he must be the Son of God that can thus advance us to the Relation of Children, that can enable us to cry Abba, Father, and can shed abroad the Love of God in our Hearts. He must be the Author of eternal Life, who can recover us that had forfeited all Right and Title to it, to so well-grounded an Expectation of it. He must be the effectual Propitiation for Sin, and the true Mediator and Peace-maker, who can give to our trembling and distressed Souls that solid and refreshing Peace that so evidently appears to be the genuine Effect of our Peace with God. For if these Grounds of Peace which the Gospel suggests be not solid and true, we may well despair of finding any other.

SER-

S E R M O N VIII.

Being the Second on the Subject of, *The Internal Evidence and Proof of Christianity.*

I John v. 10. *The first Clause.*

He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Witness (or Testimony) in himself. He that believeth not God, hath made him a Liar, because he believes not the Record that God gave of his Son.



Have already enter'd on the Consideration of this remarkable Assertion of the Apostle's.

He that believeth on the Son of God, hath the Testimony in himself, [ἐχει τὴν μαρτυρίαν ἐν αὐτῷ.]

In speaking hereto,

I. I shew'd what this *Witness or Testimony* is which every true Christian is said to have in himself.

Here I distinguish'd between the *Matter* of this Testimony, (or the thing attested) and the *Evidence* and *Proof* of it.

The *Matter* of the Testimony or the thing attested, is, *That God has given to us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son, i. e. That God has, in his gracious Covenant, made us a free Grant and Gift of eternal Life, and that this eternal Life is in his Son, as the Author and Spring of it, who procur'd it for us at the Expence of his Blood, who by his sanctifying Spirit does mould and frame us for it, and who by his royal judicial Power will put us into the full and final Possession of it.*

So that the *Thing attested* is a compendious Summary of the Gospel it self.

But besides the *Matter* of the Testimony, or the *Thing attested*, there is the *Evidence* and *Proof* of it. And 'tis of this the Apostle speaks when he saith, *That he that believes has the Testimony in himself; q. d. Every true Christian is a living Witness to this great Truth of the Christian Religion, and carries in his own Soul a solid Evidence and Proof thereof. Then,*

II. I came to the main Enquiry, *How every true Christian has such a Testimony in himself? Or what that internal Evidence and Proof is, which every true Christian has in himself of this fundamental Article of Christianity.*

Now this *internal Evidence* and *Proof* may be reduc'd to such Heads as these.

I. *That inward and universal Holiness which his Soul is form'd to, is a solid Evidence and Proof of this great Truth.*

II. *That inward Peace and Consolation which the Soul of every true Christian is replenish'd with, is a farther Evidence and Proof of this great Truth.*

These two Heads I have already consider'd. And I now add,

III. *A true Christian's eminent Conquest over this World, and his ardent joyful Aspiration to the endless Happiness of a better, is another solid Evidence and Proof of this great Truth.*

I might indeed have mention'd this as one *Branch* of that *universal Holiness* which I before spake of. But I chose rather, for the great Importance of it, to make it a *distinct Head*, because it affords us a distinct and

peculiar Proof of this excellent Summary of the Gospel. In speaking hereto, I shall shew,

First, *That this is an Effect which the Gospel produces in all true Christians.*

Secondly, *That 'tis the peculiar Effect of the Gospel-Revelation which no other Principles could produce.*

Thirdly, I shall shew how justly this Conclusion may be drawn from it, *That Jesus is the Son of God, and that God has given us eternal Life in and by him.*

First, *This is an Effect which the Gospel produces in all true Christians, viz. An eminent Conquest over this World, and ardent joyful Aspiration to the Happiness of a better.*

1. *The Gospel produces in all true Christians an eminent Conquest over this World.*

So much the Apostle intimates at the 5th Verse of this Chapter, *Who is he that overcomes the World, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God? And at Ver. 4. This is the Victory that overcometh the World, even our Faith.*

'Tis this *divine Faith* that enables a Christian to conquer the tempting Allurements of this World.

The idolized Vanities thereof carry Charms that are irresistible to carnal and sensual Minds. But divine Faith counterworks those sensual Charms, and takes from the tempting Objects of this World all the Force they would otherwise have to ensnare and captivate our Hearts. 'Tis divine Faith that draws from the Cross of Christ such an admirable Vertue to crucify a Believer to the World and the World to him, Gal. vi. 15. 'Tis divine Faith that teaches him to live as a Pilgrim and Stranger on this Earth, abstaining from fleshly Lusts, and carrying about dying Affections to all the dying Enjoyments and Interests of this poor animal Life, 1 Pet. ii. 11. 'Tis this Faith that renders him more solicitous and diligent to lay up incorruptible Treasures in Heaven, than corruptible ones on Earth; nay, makes him willing to sell all for that inestimable Pearl of Price. 'Tis this Faith that enables him to regard all the admired Honours of the World as a Piece of gilded Pageantry, as a vain and transitory Show, and even to trample on them with Disdain so far as they stand in competition with that true Honour and Glory that is to be enjoy'd in a blessed Immortality. 'Tis this Faith that prompts him to reject with Contempt those momentary Pleasures of Sin that would tempt him to forego the Hopes of endless future Joys. In a word, this divine Faith enables him to turn a deaf Ear to all the Blandishments and Flatteries of the smiling World, when it displays all its Beauties in order to the inveigling and debasing his Affections, and seducing his Heart from God and Heaven.

And the same Principle enables every true Christian to triumph over the Terrors of the World.

And

And of this *Victory* over it, those *Martyrs*, both of former and latter Ages, have given a noble *Proof*, who have with so undaunted a *Fortitude* look'd *Dangers* and *Death* it self in the Face; who for the sake of *Christ* have not lov'd their *Lives* unto the *Death*; who have with so unfainting a *Courage* resist'd unto *Blood*; who in conformity to their glorious *Head* and *Exemplar*, for the *Joy* set before them, have endured the *Cross*, despising the *Shame*, Heb. xii. 2, 3.

And such a firm and unshaken *Constancy* (not only on the *Prospect*, but in the *Midst* of the cruellest *Sufferings* themselves) has been shown by Persons, whose *Sex* and *Age* render'd them naturally most *timorous*, and least capable to bear up against the *Terrors* of such *barbarous* and *bloody* *Persecution*. Yet even such have, when *tortur'd*, not accepted *Deliverance* (on so base Terms as that of renouncing the *Truth*) that they might obtain a better *Resurrection*, Heb. xi. 35. And every true *Christian* is such a *Martyr* in *Resolution*. He enters on his *Discipleship* with a sincere Purpose to *deny* himself, and take up his *Cross*, and to follow his blessed *Saviour*, thro' the *Cross* to the *Crown*, and thro' *Sufferings* unto *Glory*. He embraces the *Faith* of *Christ* in his *Heart* on the *Condition*, not only of *confessing* it with his *Mouth*, but, if call'd to it, of *sealing* it with his *Blood*. And sure such an *eminent* *Conquest* over both the *flattering* and *frowning* *World* as this, is a *difficult* and yet noble *Attainment*; and yet every true *Christian* is such a prevalent *Conqueror* over it.

2. The Gospel does also produce in every true *Christian* a *vigorous* and *joyful* *Aspiration* to the *endless* *Happiness* of a better *World*.

He sees nothing here below *suitable* to the *Nature* and highest *Capacities*, and *adequate* to the *perpetual* *Duration* of his own *Soul*. All things under the *Sun* appear to him but *Vanity* of *Vanities*, empty and *unsatisfying*, as well as *transitory* and *perishing*. He therefore seeks for an *Happiness* beyond the *Bounds* of *Sense* and the *Reach* of *Time*. And having such a *satisfying* and *durable* *Blessedness* propos'd to him in the *great* and *precious* *Promises* of the Gospel, he gladly embraces it, and becomes a *zealous* *Candidate* and *joyful* *Expectant* of *eternal* *Life*. This glorious *Prize* he makes the *Object* of his warmest *Ambition* and most *delightful* *Hopes*. And hence his *Heart* and his *Conversation* are in *Heaven*, for there his most valuable *Treasure* is laid up. Thither he daily tends in his *believing* *Fore* thoughts, and *servent* *Desires*, and *Heart-ravishing* *Expectations*. Nay, so fervent are his *Desires*, that he here even groans under the *Imperfections* of his *sinful* and *distant* *State*, and is brought to that happy *Frame* (even notwithstanding his natural *Aversion* to *Death*) as to be *confident* and *willing* to be *absent* from the *Body*, and *present* with the *Lord*; nay, to be *desirous* to *depart* and be with *Christ*, 2 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8. Phil. i. 23. So far do the warm *Breathings* of his *Soul* after the *Glories* of a blessed *Immortality* overcome all *inordinate* *Love* of *natural* *Life*. And such transporting *Delight* does the *Prospect* of that future *Blessedness* sometimes fill him with, that he even here feels some sweet *Fore-taste* of it, and rejoices in the *Hope* of it with a *Joy* *unspeakable* and *full* of *Glory*, see 1 Pet. i. 8.

Such a *mortified*, such a *divine* and *heavenly* *Frame* does the Gospel mould the *Heart* of every sincere *Christian* into. And,

Secondly, Such an *eminent* *Conquest* over this *World*, such a *vigorous* and *joyful* *Aspiration* to the *Happiness* of a better, is a *peculiar* *Effect* of the Gospel-Revelation, which no other *Principles* could produce.

The *Happiness* of another *State* being a *Reward* that *God* is under no *Obligation* to bestow, and which we can no way *claim* from his *Justice*; the *Light* of *Nature* can only give us some *probable* *Hope* concerning it, but can discover very little either of the *Nature* or *Duration* thereof. And accordingly we see that the wisest of the *Heathen* *Moralists* were involv'd in miserable *Uncertainties* about it. Even those that go highest in arguing for the *Immortality* of the *Soul* of *Man*

(which is necessarily pre-suppos'd to a *State* of future *Rewards*) do yet frequently profess they founded their *Opinion* concerning it only on some *probable* *Conjectures*, rather than on any *certain* and *satisfying* *Evidence*. 'Tis in such doubtful and diffident *Language* as this that such Men as *Socrates* and *Cicero* speak, who seem to have been the most *zealous* *Assertors* of the *Immortality* of the *Soul*. And for the *Nature* of that future *Happiness*, their *Apprehensions* concerning it were either very *gross* and *sensual* (like those which *Mahomet's* Followers entertain concerning their *Paradise*) or *absurd* and *foolish*, (placing it in the *Transmigration* of human *Souls* into the *Bodies* of some *innocent* *Beasts* or *Birds*) or at best *merely* *conjectural* and *doubtful*. And the *Generality* of those that suppos'd human *Souls* to survive their *Bodies*, seem'd to assign them only a *long*, not a *perpetual* and *endless* *Duration*. Nay, these dark *Apprehensions* themselves concerning a future *State* of *Happiness*, seem to have been rather the curious *Speculations* of their *Philosophers*, than the general *Opinion* of the *People* in the *Heathen* *World*, being never (as one has well observ'd) *establish'd* as any *Part* of their *Religion*, nor the *Belief* of them ever requir'd by any *Law* among them. And how little could it be expected, that the *Body* of the *Gentile* *World* should be powerfully influenc'd by such dark and *conjectural* *Opinions* concerning a *State* of future *Happiness* as few of them gave any great *Credit* to, and the wisest among them look'd on as *dubious* and *uncertain*? How justly may it be ascrib'd to *divine* *Revelation* in general, and particularly to the Gospel of *Christ*, as the *peculiar* *Glory* thereof, that thereby *Life* and *Immortality* are brought into (clear and *perspicuous*) *Light*, 2 Tim. i. 10. 'Tis that alone has given us such *satisfying* *Assurance* of such a glorious *Immortality* as our whole *Nature*, our *Bodies* as well as *Souls* shall partake of. The *Resurrection* of the *Body* being wholly unknown to the *Pagan* *World*, 'tis that alone has taught us to place that future *Happiness* in the *immediate* *Vision* of *God*, and *perfect* *Conformity* to him, and *full* *Enjoyment* of him; 'tis that alone has reveal'd to us the *endless* *Duration* of it; 'tis that alone has clearly discover'd on what *Terms* that transcendent and glorious *Reward* will be bestow'd, and fortify'd us against those *discouraging* *Fears* that the *Sense* of our own *Unworthiness* and *Guilt* do naturally suggest to our *Minds*, to the weakning of our *divine* *Hopes*. In a word, were this *divine* *Revelation* lay'd aside, we should have no *clear* and *solid* *Foundation* for our *heavenly* *Hope*; we should be left to all the woful *Uncertainties* and *disconsolate* *Darkness* in which the *Generality* of the *Pagan* *World* were involv'd. So justly may every true *Christian* say to our blessed *Lord* in the *Language* of the *Apostle* *Peter*, To whom shall we go, for thou hast the *Words* of *eternal* *Life*? John vi. 68.

And that leads me,

Thirdly, To shew how justly we may hence infer, That *God* has given us *eternal* *Life*, and that this *Life* is in his *Son*.

Now we may very well reason thus.

What *Promise* can be more worthy of an infinitely gracious *God* to make, and of the *Soul* of *Man* to embrace, than that of *eternal* *Life*? Since the *Light* of *Nature* gives us some *obscure* *Glimpses*, and raises us to some (tho' *uncertain*) *Hopes* of a blessed *Immortality*, what could be more agreeable to the *Goodness* of *God* than by supernatural *Revelation* to give us a *clear* and *satisfying* *Discovery* of it?

And where shall we meet with any such clear and *satisfying* *Discovery* but in the Gospel of *Christ*; who thus profess'd himself to be the *Son* of *God*? And can we ever think that the infinitely wise and holy *God* would ever make use of a *false* *Pretender* and *vile* *Impositor* to give us so bright a *Revelation* concerning a future and *endless* *State* of *Glory*, and so affecting a *Representation* of it as shall beget many Millions of *Souls* to the living *Hope* of that *incorruptible* *heavenly* *Inheritance*? Nay, would he ever so far countenance such an *Impositor*,

for, as to give such Assurance to the World of the Truth of his Doctrine concerning the Resurrection and the future Judgment by raising him from the Dead, and giving thereby to all his Followers such a Specimen, such an Evidence and Earnest of that Immortality he had promis'd them? *Acts* xvii. 31. Have we not on the contrary all possible Reason to believe him to be what he profess'd himself, even the Son of God, who has brought us so clear a Discovery, and so glorious a Grant and Promise of eternal Life; (and that as the Purchase of his own Blood) and who has by his own Resurrection and Ascension (as well as by his miraculous Power in raising others) given us such a Pledge and Security of ours? What greater Errand could the Son of God come down from Heaven upon, than to unveil the Glories of that invisible State, and to guide our heaven-born Souls in the way to it? And what clearer Evidence could be given of his divine Mission on this excellent Errand, than that of his own Resurrection and Ascension?

And can we ever think such a Revelation as this to be no better than a gross Imposture and Delusion, when this noble Effect of it is so heavenly and divine? Were there no such thing as eternal Life, would the infinitely wise and good God suffer the best of Men to be thus deluded with the mistaken Hopes of it! For if those Hopes prove only a wretched Delusion, They are (as the Apostle saith, *1 Cor.* xv. 19.) of all Men the most miserable. And yet doubtless, those that entertain these heavenly Hopes, and are from thence induc'd to trample on this World, and to repel the numerous Temptations of it, and to aspire with so ardent Desires to a State of immortal Blessedness above, are the wisest and best of Men.

'Tis these Candidates and Expectants of eternal Life are the Men that entertain the most honourable Thoughts of God, and aim at the nearest Conformity to him, and are most entirely devoted to his Service, and possess'd with the most ardent and superlative Love of him. And can we think that he will abandon them of all others to the most pernicious Delusions? Nay, use his own Almighty Power to countenance and credit the grand Deceiver? Sure we can never think so injuriously of him, concerning whom, next to his Being or Existence, we ought to believe, That he is the (liberal) Rewarder of all that diligently seek him, *Heb.* xi. 6.

Nor can we easily think that Promise of eternal Life to be a Delusion, which so evidently tends to elevate and raise, to exalt and perfect the Soul of Man, and to cast it into such a God-like and Heavenly Mould. The Holy God needs not make use of a Lye and Deceit to produce so excellent and noble an Effect. That Doctrine must needs be from God that so powerfully leads the Soul of Man to choose and fix on him, as its satisfying Portion, and the Centre of its everlasting Rest.

Having thus shewn what Internal Evidence and Proof every true Christian has in himself of this great Truth, viz. That God has given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son, I now proceed,

III. To apply it. Has every true Believer the Witness or Testimony in himself? Then,

I. We may hence infer, What a solid Confirmation this Internal Evidence, in conjunction with that External Evidence we have for the Truth of the Gospel, gives to our Christian Faith.

The Testimony of those Witnesses mention'd in the foregoing part of the Chapter, is clear and full.

So was the Testimony of the Father, by frequently repeated audible Voices from Heaven, *Matt.* iii. 17. — *Matt.* xvii. 5. *John* xii. 28.

So was the Testimony of the Word, by so frequent and glorious sensible Manifestations of himself after his Ascension to Heaven, — *Acts* v. 59. — *Acts* ix. — *Acts* xxii. 17, 18. — *2 Cor.* xii. 1. — *Rev.* i. 1, 2. — *Rev.* v. 6. — *Rev.* xix. 11, 12.

So was the Testimony of the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous Descent, first upon Christ himself, and then on his Holy Apostles, and in all the extraordinary Gifts confer'd upon them.

Nor was the Testimony of the three Witnesses on Earth less full and clear.

The Spirit attested this Truth on Earth, in those manifold uncontroll'd Miracles which our Saviour wrought.

The Water attested the same, i. e. The Purity of the Doctrine and Life of Christ was a solid Evidence of its divine Authority and Truth.

And his precious Blood gave a remarkable Attestation thereto, both as he thereby seal'd the Truth of his Doctrine, and as his expiatory Sacrifice answer'd the manifold Predictions and Types of the Old Testament.

Now, when every true Believer finds this heavenly Doctrine (which has been confirm'd by such solid external Evidence that is conspicuous to all) producing so truly divine Effects in his own Soul, mortifying his corrupt Inclinations and Affections, restoring him to the amiable Image of God, and forming him to universal Holiness of Heart and Life; diffusing a sweet but solid and well-grounded Peace into his Conscience, raising him above this World, and giving him so happy a Victory over the Temptations thereof, and forming in him such ennobling Desires and joyful Hopes of a blessed Immortality: And when this internal Evidence does so entirely conspire and harmonize with that external Evidence I mention'd before, this greatly strengthens his Faith, and renders it Proof against the greatest Temptations to Infidelity. Nay, this Testimony, which every true Believer carries in his own Breast, and which is founded on his own inward Sensation and Experience, is so satisfying and clear, that it enables those that cannot dispute for their Religion to dye for it. 'Tis this that fortifies the weakest Christians against all the Cavils of the most subtle Infidels. All their Objections against Christianity are but to him an arguing against the inward Sensation and Experience of his own Soul. He is ready to say to such perverse Cavillers, as the Man cur'd of his natural Blindness did to the unbelieving Jews, when they said, We know that God spake unto Moses, but as for this Fellow, we know not whence he is. Why (saith he) herein is a marvellous Thing, that ye know not from whence he is, and yet he has opened mine Eyes. Now we know that God heareth not Sinners, but if any Man worships him, and does his Will, him he heareth; If this Man were not of God he could do nothing, see *John* ix. 29, 30, 31, 32. — So may a true Believer say, 'tis a strange Thing that you know not from whence Christ is, or whether he be the Son of God and the Author of eternal Life. For my own Part, I actually find by happy Experience, that as his Promises have begotten me to the living Hope of a blessed Immortality, so his sanctifying Grace has fram'd and moulded my Soul for it, and given me some sweet Foretastes of it, even such as have rendered all Things contemptible in my Eyes that stand in Competition with it. And shall I doubt of the Reality of that eternal Life, of which I find the Principle and Seed in my own Soul? Shall I question, whether he will bring me to the Possession of that heavenly Inheritance, when he has already given me the Earnest of it in my own Heart? But,

II. We may hence farther infer, How little there is of true and sincere Faith in the Christian World.

For alas! 'Tis but few that carry any such inward Testimony to the Truth of Christianity, in what they themselves feel and know of the divine Efficacy and Power of it. Alas! The Faith of the Generality of pretended Christians, is but a slight and superficial Assent, that makes no transforming Change on their Hearts and Lives. 'Tis but as the Apostle James styles it, a dead Faith, *James* ii. ult. It does not realize to their Minds the glorious Things of an unseen eternal State; it does not elevate their Affections to the Things that are Above; it does not cast their Souls into a divine and heavenly Mould. And therefore they carry no such inward Testimony to the Truth of Christianity in their own Breasts.

And this leads me to add,

III. We may hence see, how little wonder it is, That Infidelity

Infidelity should so much spread and prevail in this degenerate Age.

Alas! 'Tis but few whose Faith is vital and sincere. 'Tis but few therefore, that carry this confirming Testimony to the Truth of the Gospel in their own Souls. And 'tis no wonder that those should be *unstedfast* in their Profession of the Christian Doctrine, who never felt the transforming Power of it. 'Tis no wonder that those that put away a good Conscience should make Shipwreck of the Faith—1 Tim. i. 19. Nay, those who abandon themselves to the Conduct of their sensual Lusts, and run with a wicked World into all Excess of Riot, are under a strong Temptation to renounce those holy Doctrines which they cannot reconcile with their ungodly Practice, and to fall in with those Principles of Infidelity that are more favourable to their beloved Lusts. In this Case, the Strength of their vicious Inclinations will give a powerful Bias to their Judgments towards the wretched Cause of Infidelity; the most being unwilling to believe what they are very unwilling should be true. Since therefore there is so very little of the Life and Power of practical Christianity left among us, 'tis no way strange, that the Contagion of Infidelity spreads so fast, when the Generality are so prepar'd to receive the fatal Infection. And there is no effectual Way of putting a Stop to it, but by recovering and restoring the inward and vital Power of the Christian Religion, which is a far different Thing from the bare external Profession of it.

IV. We may hence also see, *Why the Faith of the Generality of sincere Christians is comparatively so weak and wavering.*

Did we feel more of the genuine and excellent Effects of the Doctrine of Christianity upon our own Souls, our Assent to it, and inward Persuasion concerning the Truth of it, would be more vigorous and strong. Were our Souls more entirely deliver'd into the Mould and Form of that heavenly Doctrine we profess to believe, did the Truth we have been taught more powerfully engage us to put off the Old Man and put on the New, (by a due Progress and Proficiency in universal Holiness); did we feel more of the Efficacy of divine Truth, in conforming us more to the Nature and Will of God; were his Promises a more abundant Spring of Consolation and Joy; did the Prospect of a future Glory deaden us more to this World, and more powerfully elevate our Affections to a better; we should not then be liable to so manifold Doubts concerning the Truth of Christianity, nor have so woful Remains of Darkness and Unbelief to struggle with. Whereas now we usually find, that as the sanctifying Impression of these divine Truths on our own Souls is so weak, as to be scarce discernable to the View of our own Consciences, so accordingly our Assent unto them is comparatively weak and wavering; and we have great Reason to take up the Complaint of that poor Man in the Gospel, *Lord, I believe, help thou my Unbelief*, Mark ix. 24.

V. Let us then be more concern'd to have this Testimony, this internal Evidence and Proof of the Truth of Christianity in our own Souls.

And this Exhortation I shall enforce, by suggesting something by way of Direction and Motive.

For Direction.

1. Let us often review the external Evidence we have for the Truth of Christianity, in order to the confirming our Belief of it.

'Tis the due Consideration of those external Evidences and Proofs that must be instrumental both to beget and nourish this great Principle of divine Faith in us.

We should often contemplate the Excellency and Sublimity of the Doctrine of the Gospel, and particularly of this grand Article of it, *That God has given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son*. We should deeply consider the admirable Harmony and Correspondence of what the Gospel declares concerning it, both with the Principles of Natural Religion, and with the Gradual Revelations of the divine Will to the foregoing

Ages. We should diligently observe the admirable Tendency of this heavenly Doctrine to advance the Glory of God, and to restore his Kingdom among Men, and to recover us to the Image and Favour of God, and to dispose us for a State of consummate Happiness in the Enjoyment of him. We should often contemplate what a clear Attestation was given from Heaven to the Son of God, both by an audible Voice from Heaven, and by that more silent but no less convincing Argument which his numerous uncontrou'd Miracles (the visible Effects of a Divine and Almighty Power) afforded to confirm his divine Mission. We should seriously consider, what sensible Proofs our blessed Saviour gave of this great Truth, by his Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven, by his glorious Appearances from thence; and above all, by his marvellous Effusion of his Holy Spirit in the extraordinary Gifts of it, and those so long continued in his Church, and this, according to his own express Promise and Prediction upon his Departure out of this World. Let us then attentively hear what all these Witnesses both in Heaven and Earth depose concerning this divine Truth; and we shall find that their Testimony deserves and will every way justify our firmest Assent thereunto. For (as the Evangelist well observes) *these Things are written for this very End, that we might believe, that Jesus is the Christ (or the Anointed) the Son of God, and that believing we might have Life through his Name*,—John xx. 31. Let then this full Stream of external Evidence be well digested in our Minds, that it may carry powerful Conviction into them, and form in us a strong and lively Persuasion of these important and necessary Truths. And the stronger this Persuasion is, we shall feel the more the Influence of what we do thus assent unto upon so solid Evidence on our own Minds.

But that leads me to add,

2. Let us be especially concern'd, *That our divine Faith produce all its genuine and vital Effects upon our own Souls.*

Let us by no Means content our selves with a dead and unoperative Faith. Do we believe the Gospel to be indeed a Declaration of the Mind and Will of God by his incarnate Son, let us not hold this Truth in Unrighteousness, but endeavour to act conformably to such a Belief. Let the Assent of our Judgments to the Offers of Reconciliation with God thro' the Blood of Christ, produce in us a cordial Acceptance of them, by a penitent Return to him; and let those divine Truths form us to a just Abhorrence of Sin, and reverential Dread of the Justice of God, to an ingenuous Resolution of dying to Sin, and living to him that died for us and rose again. Let our Belief of what the Gospel reveals, concerning the matchless and transcendent Love of God manifested to us in the Son of his Love, form in us an ardent and superlative Love of our God and Saviour, and bring us under the powerful Constraints thereof, and engage us to an Imitation thereof by all suitable Acts of God-like Love to Men, even to our Enemies themselves. Let our Assent to that glorious Promise of eternal Life in the World to come, extinguish more and more our inordinate Love to this World, and enable us to conquer its manifold Temptations; and to keep our selves unspotted from its heinous Pollutions; let our Belief of it render that eternal Life the Object of our most vehement Desires, our most delightful Hopes and vigorous Prosecution. Let our Faith bring our Souls under the attractive Power of the World to come, and give the glorious Objects thereof a transforming and commanding Influence upon our Hearts and Lives. And then, indeed, what we experience and feel of Christianity, will be a solid additional Evidence of the Truth of it. Then we shall be ready to say to those that propose to us the external Evidences of the Truth of Christianity, as the believing Inhabitants of Sychar did to the Samaritan Woman: *Now we believe, not because of thy Saying; (not merely on this external Evidence) For we have heard him our selves, and know, that this is the Christ the Saviour of the World*, John iv. 42. So we may say, we now know by what he has

done to reconcile us to God, and bring us nigh to him, to restore his Image in our own Souls, to beget us to the Hope of, and to render us meet for the Inheritance of the Saints in Light; by this we know and perceive, That God has given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son. You see then, that there is such a near Alliance and Connexion between our Faith and those other Graces that are the genuine Fruits thereof, that as the Exercises of our divine Faith tend to excite and improve all other Graces in us, so the Vigour and Activity of those Graces gives such a Testimony and Proof to the Truth of Christianity, as greatly tends to strengthen our Belief of it. We must believe the heavenly Doctrine, that we may live up to it; and the more we live up to it, we shall be the more strongly persuaded of the Truth of it.

I shall only add a Motive or two to enforce this Advice.

And,

1. Let it be consider'd, That such a Faith as does not by its genuine and excellent Effects, furnish us with such an inward Evidence and Proof of the Truth of Christianity, is but a dead Faith that will neither justify nor save us.

To such, in whom that Christianity they profess is but a lifeless and dead Opinion, I may justly use the Exposition of the Apostle James, *What does it profit my Brethren, though a Man say he hath Faith, and have not Works? Can Faith save him? No, It can no more save him, than his bare good Wishes or good Words can warm or fill his naked and destitute Brethren, see James ii. 13, 14, &c.* 'Tis not thy believing, that God has given us eternal Life, and that this Life is in his Son, will be any way available to bring thee to the actual Possession of it, unless thou acceptest of the Son of God as the Author of it, and chooseth that eternal Life as thy Felicity and Portion; (giving it the Preference before every Thing in this World that stands in Competition with it) and aspiest to it in that Course of persevering Holiness, which the Gospel recommends as the only Way that leads to it.

2. Let it be farther consider'd, That if thy Faith do furnish thee with this inward Testimony, this Evidence and

Proof of the Truth of Christianity, it will put Life and Vigour into thy Profession, and render it truly delightful.

O at what a Rate may a true Christian act, when he finds in himself the solid Grounds of such a comfortable Perswasion, That God has given us eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son? With what a lively Faith may he offer his Prayers for eternal Life, when he finds the Seed and Principle of it sown in his own Soul! How may this encourage his comfortable Perswasion, that he who has begun this good Work will finish it! And he that has laid the Foundation will also lay the Top-Stone! Nay, how will the strong Perswasion of eternal Life, and the satisfying Sense of his own Interest therein, tune his Heart for that great Duty of Praise, and enlarge his Soul in grateful Acknowledgments to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has begotten him through his Resurrection to such a living Hope, to such an incorruptible Inheritance! See 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.—How attentively will he hear, how deeply will his Soul be affected with that heavenly Doctrine that has rais'd him to these divine Hopes, and tends to mould him for that State of endless Perfection and Glory which he is made an Heir and Expectant of! How delightful will all Occasions be of renewing his Communion with that blessed Saviour, whom he esteems and loves as the Purchaser and the Giver of eternal Life! What Pleasure will he find in commemorating that Death of Christ, which was the invaluable Price by which he obtain'd for us this glorious Gift of eternal Life! With what Satisfaction will he meditate on those Promises which are the Deed of Conveyance, and the grand Charter of his eternal Hopes! With what Joy will he receive the Seals of God's gracious Covenant, that are the Pledges of his own Interest in it, and particularly in this inestimable Blessing of it! With what Transports of Delight will he partake of those Memorials of the Body and Blood of Christ, by which, as the external Signs, a gracious God puts into his Hands a sealed Pardon and Right to eternal Life! How will what he already feels of the saving Power of Christ, raise him to the joyful Expectation of receiving at last the End of his Faith, even his consummate Salvation!

S E R M O N IX.

On the MINISTRY of ANGELS.

Heb. i. ult.

Are they not all ministering Spirits sent forth to minister for them, who shall be Heirs of Salvation.



WHEN I seriously ponder how much the Scriptures speak, concerning the Ministry of the Holy Angels, what considerable Benefits we now derive from our present Communion with them, and how great an Ingredient of our future Happiness our more immediate Converse with them in the heavenly Regions will be, I cannot but think that this important Subject is too little consider'd and improv'd in our serious Meditations upon it. For tho' we cannot too carefully guard against that gross Extreme, into which those of the Romish Church have run, by their idolatrous and superstitious Excesses of Devotion towards those blessed Spirits; yet there is no Reason

why we should run into the other Extreme, by our overlooking their kind Ministrations, and forgetting the Relation we bear unto them, as a Part of the same blessed Community. And therefore that I may both lay before you what God has been pleas'd to reveal to us, concerning the Use he makes of them for our Advantage and Welfare, and also propose to you such practical Instructions concerning your Duty, as the Contemplation of this Truth does naturally suggest, I have chosen to insist on these excellent Words of the inspired Writer to the Hebrews.

As to the Occasion of them, I need only suggest to you, that the inspired Writer in this Chapter, undertakes to show the Superiority of our blessed Saviour over the

the highest Angels, which he does from various Arguments. From the peculiar Relation the Father claims to him as his only begotten Son, even in such a Sense as Angels themselves are not, ver. 5. from their Obligation to worship him, which plainly implies their Inferiority and Subjection, by whom this Homage was to be paid, ver. 6. And from the sovereign Dominion delegated to him over that World which he at first made (as well as since came to redeem and new make); whereas Angels are under him, employ'd only in Ministry and Service. Christ sits at the Father's right Hand, even on his Throne, vested with Royal Authority; but Angels stand, and attend there to execute the Orders they receive. They are ministering Spirits sent forth at his Pleasure, (for the Scripture elsewhere clearly asserts their being subject to his mediatorial Authority, see Eph. i. 21, 22.—1 Pet. iii. 22.—Rev. v. 6.) to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation.

And this excellent Truth I come now to consider, viz. That Holy Angels are ministering Spirits, sent forth to minister to them that are Heirs of Salvation.

And in treating thereon, I shall,

First, Consider, What is here briefly suggested to us, concerning the Nature of Holy Angels.

Secondly, More fully enquire into what is here intimated concerning their Office and Work:

First, I shall only briefly consider, what is suggested to us concerning their Nature. They are Spirits.

And by this Title of Spirits, without any other Addition, they are distinguish'd from human Souls; which tho' they are also in Scripture call'd Spirits, yet to discriminate them from this nobler Order and Rank of intellectual Beings, they are call'd the Spirits of all Flesh,—Numb. xvi. 12. xxvii. 16. i. e. Spirits that dwell in Flesh, that inhabit and are confin'd unto these Tabernacles of Clay, these earthly and mortal Bodies. So that 'tis highly probable, that Angels are entirely unembod'd Spirits. And tho' they have often assum'd corporeal Vehicles, even of so gross Consistence as to be visible to human Sense, yet 'tis as evident they could at Pleasure put them off again; and either they are wholly free from Confinement to any Body whatsoever, or at least to any so gross and sensible, so unweildy and unactive as ours are.

But when the Scripture says, they are Spirits, it does not determine, whether there be any specifick Difference in their Nature, and in their essential Faculties and Powers between them and human Souls; or only a Difference in the Degrees of Excellency. That there is the latter seems past doubt, from the Account the Scriptures give of them, i. e. That what Powers or Perfections they seem to have in common with human Souls, they possess in a far more eminent Measure and Degree. Thus both Angels and human Souls are endu'd with vital Activity. But we read such Instances of the mighty Force and Power of those superior Spirits, as not only vastly transcend the present Power of our Souls while encumbred with these earthly Bodies, but would probably much transcend their Activity even in their separated State. As we may see in the Instance of the Angel that in one Night slew 185000 in the Assyrian Camp, 2 Kings xix. 35. And the like might be inferr'd from several destructive Judgments, which Angels were employ'd as the Executioners of, and that suppose vast Power in the Agent that effects them. And accordingly, the Psalmist speaks of Angels as excelling in Strength, and thereby eminently qualify'd to execute the Orders of their heavenly Sovereign, Psal. ciii. 20. So, tho' Angels as well as human Souls are endu'd with intellectual Powers, yet doubtless, their Understandings far exceed ours in their Capacity and Manner of Knowing, and in the Compass and Extent of their Knowledge. And hence 'tis mention'd as a Character of extraordinary Wisdom, to be wise according to the Wisdom of an Angel of God, to know all Things that are on the Earth, 2 Sam. xiv. 20. And the like Difference may be suppos'd as to all other intellectual Excellencies that are in general common to them with human Souls.

Those glorious Spirits are almost as far elevated above ours in the degree of them (at least at present) as the lofty Regions they inhabit are above this Earth, to which our Souls are confin'd while they dwell in Flesh; I say at least, at present, because how far the intellectual Powers of perfected Spirits will be exalted and enlarg'd in that future State wherein we are said to be *idways*, like or equal to Angels, we cannot with any Certainty conclude.

This is all I shall suggest as to the Nature of those excellent Spirits. And that there are such Spirits, is not only undeniably evident from the holy Scriptures that so frequently speak of them, but it has been the current Opinion of the Heathen World it self, and seems to be one of those Truths that have been handed down by an universal Tradition amongst at least all the most civiliz'd Nations of the Earth. But for us that own the Authority of the Scriptures, the matter can admit of no Dispute.

I come therefore,

Secondly, To enquire more largely into what is here intimated concerning the Office and Work of holy Angels.

They are (saith the Text) ministering Spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be Heirs of Salvation.

Where we may distinctly consider,

I. The special Object of their Ministration, viz. Those who shall be Heirs of Salvation.

II. Their Deputation to their Office, They are sent forth.

III. Their Ministration or Service it self.

I. We have here the Object of their Ministration, or those about whom their Ministry and Service is employed, viz. Those who shall be Heirs of Salvation, *διὰ τὴν μέλλουσαν κληρονομίαν σωτηρίας*; or those who shall inherit or possess that consummate Salvation which Jesus Christ came to be the Author of.

But we must not hence infer, that all the Service and Ministry of Angels is employ'd about good Men; for doubtless they are also often sent as the Executioners of God's righteous Vengeance against the Wicked. And they are also the Ministers of divine Providence in the ordering the general Affairs of Kingdoms, and highly instrumental in effecting many of those remarkable Revolutions and Changes that happen therein; as we may justly infer from what the Angel that appear'd to Daniel relates to him, Dan. x. 13, 20, 21. and Dan. xi. 1. — And accordingly the learned Mr. Mede has said much to render it probable, that the seven Spirits that are said to be before the Throne of God, and are compar'd to seven Lamps burning there, Rev. iv. 5. — And are also said to be the Eyes of the Lord sent forth into all the Earth, — Rev. v. 6. — compar'd with Zech. iv. 10. — must be understood of seven Archangels, as the principal Ministers of divine Providence in the Government of this lower World. For that there is a considerable Difference among those blessed Spirits themselves in point of Dignity and Authority, seems evident from the very Name of Archangels as well as from those different Titles of Thrones and Dominions, Principalities and Powers, by which the particular Members that compose that heavenly Host, are distinguished one from another, see Col. i. 16. So much indeed we may in general conclude, tho' to descend to Particulars, and pretend to give a distinct Account of the several Orders of that celestial Hierarchy, is but the presumptuous Folly of such as (contrary to the Apostle's Caution) intrude into things they have not seen, — Col. ii. 18.

We must not then think the Ministry of Angels entirely confin'd to the Heirs of Salvation. But we may hence justly infer, That their beneficial Ministry is chiefly employ'd about them, and they are the principal Objects of their Inspection and Care. And indeed their Ministrations that respect the general Affairs of Kingdoms and States, have often an ultimate Reference to the Good of the Church, those Alterations or Revolutions they bring about being serviceable to the Designs of divine Providence for the Enlargement or Establishment of his own Kingdom: So that the Welfare of

good Men, and especially the promoting their final Salvation, is the most valuable End which their Ministrations are intended to subserve. 'Tis in the Prosecution of his gracious Design for bringing those to the full Possession of the heavenly Glory whom he hath made the Heirs of it, that God chiefly makes use of the Service of those excellent Spirits. 'Tis chiefly for their Advantage and Benefit, for their Comfort and Encouragement, that these Attendants on the heavenly Court are so often sent forth, on particular kind Offices and Errands here below.

Which leads me to consider,

II. The Deputation of Holy Angels to this Office, They are ministring Spirits, sent forth.

If it be here enquir'd, By whom they are sent forth?

Answer, They are indeed the Angels of God, the great Lord of the heavenly Hosts, whose Commands they are employ'd to execute, and by his Order they are sent. They are his Messengers, and the Ministers of his Providence. But they are also subjected to the Authority of Christ as Mediator, and have their particular Ministrations and Services appointed by him, by whom the Kingdom of God in this lower World is now administr'd. To Him even those heavenly Principalities bow the Knee, as the great Lord of the Hades or Invisible World, Phil. ii. 10. — Rev. i. 18. And therefore those seven Spirits before the Throne that are call'd the Eyes of the Lord, Zech. iv. 10. are call'd the Eyes of the Lamb, Rev. v. 6. as being the Ministers of his Providence, who has all Authority in Heaven as well as on Earth put into his Hands by the Father.

And even this Consideration does the more fully assure us, That their Ministry shall be employ'd for the Advantage and Benefit of his Members, who are the designed Heirs of Salvation. For doubtless our blessed Saviour will use their Services chiefly for accomplishing the great Ends of his mediatorial Government.

Which leads me,

III. To consider, The Ministration and Service of holy Angels it self; or, wherein they are ministring Spirits to the Heirs of Salvation.

And here we may distinguish between the particular Instances of their Ministry that seem extraordinary, and those that are more ordinary and stated.

First, There are some Instances of their Ministry that seem extraordinary and occasional only.

And such I account most of those to have been wherein Angels in their Appearance have assum'd a visible Shape to deliver some particular Messages to good Men.

Nothing is more frequent under the Old Testament than the historical Account of such Apparitions of Angels, sent on some such particular Errands to God's faithful Servants. For tho' I deny not but some of those Passages commonly alledg'd to this Purpose must be apply'd to Jesus Christ, (the Angel of the Covenant) yet I think it past all Doubt, that many of them are to be understood of created Angels, according to the most obvious Sense of the Words. It was an Angel that twice appeared to Hagar, Gen. xvi. and xxi. Angels at several times appeared to Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Manoah, and his Wife, to David, to Daniel, &c. To Joseph, to the blessed Virgin, to Zacharias, to Peter, to Cornelius, to Paul, &c. and usually to deliver some particular Message to them, either concerning what God requir'd them to do in some particular Cases, or what he was about himself to do on their Behalf.

'Tis indeed true, that these sensible Appearances of Angels on such special Occasions are not so common since the coming of Christ and the Establishment of the Christian Church as they seem to have been before.

For tho' I cannot say, nor do I think that there have been no such particular Favour granted since then to any in the Christian Church, yet doubtless the frequent Apparitions of Angels which the Popish Legends abound with in the Lives of their pretended Saints, are meer fabulous Relations, not only destitute of any credible Evidence, but such as generally carry the

visible Marks of Falshood and Forgery engraven upon them. So that we are to look on such sensible Visions pay'd by these Inhabitants of the other World to good Men here, as extraordinary things, and what are not to be now usually expected. And perhaps one Reason hereof may be, that we who have a far clearer Declaration of the divine Will brought by the Son of God himself, do the less need any such particular Messages for our Instruction and Direction brought by holy Angels.

But we are chiefly concerned to consider,

Secondly, Those Instances of the Ministry of holy Angels, which are more ordinary and stated, and such as good Men may in every Age expect the Benefit of.

And we may consider their Ministry as it is exercis'd both about our Bodies and our Souls.

I. About our Bodies.

And here the Scriptures frequently and plainly intimate to us, That the great God makes considerable use of their Ministry for our Preservation, from manifold Evils and Dangers to which our frail Nature is liable. And accordingly we read that the Angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivers them, Psal. xxxiv. 7. And over such, he gives his Angels Charge to keep them in all their Ways, and bear them up in their Hands, lest they should dash their Foot against a Stone, Psal. xci. 11, 12. quoted Matt. iv. 6. And on that Account the Psalmist had observ'd in the Verse before, That no Evil should befall them, nor any Plague come nigh their Dwelling.

He constitutes them as it were our watchful Guardians, to take care of our Safety, by warning us of our Dangers, or interposing their invisible Power to rescue us from them. And little do we know or consider, how many wonderful Deliverances from eminent (tho' sometimes unseen) Evils, and how much of our Protection and Success in our secular Concerns and Interests we owe to their vigilant Conduct and invisible Aid. They that open'd the Prison-Doors to the Apostles, Acts v. 19. and afterwards particularly knock'd off the Fetters of Peter, Acts xii. 7. have often in as real tho' in a more imperceptible Manner rescued good Men out of the Hands of their persecuting Enemies, or saved them from the Brink of temporal Destruction. And indeed most credible History presents us with many very memorable and marvellous Deliverances of good Men from such seemingly inevitable perils of Ruin, as cannot reasonably be ascrib'd to any other Cause than the insensible but powerful Agency of those good Spirits. And that they are often assisting to us in all Affairs of considerable Moment and Consequence, we may probably infer from what Abraham said to his Servant Eliezer when sent on a particular Errand, The Lord will send his Angel with thee, and prosper thy way, Gen. xxiv. 7. The Truth is, we that know so little of the Extent of their Power and their various ways of employing it for our Good and Relief, can as little comprehend all the Advantages and Benefits that even in respect of our bodily Welfare we derive from their Ministry, and all the good Offices thereof.

But we must farther consider their Ministry as exercis'd,

II. About our Souls.

And tho' we may perhaps in some Respects more easily comprehend how their Ministry may contribute to the Safety of our Bodies, than to the Welfare of our Souls, yet I think the Text it self gives us just Ground to conclude that their Ministry is chiefly serviceable to promote the great Design of our final Salvation. And indeed I see no Ground to doubt, but that holy Angels are as capable by their Assistance to promote our eternal Blessedness, as the Devil and his Angels are to promote the Ruin and Destruction of miserable Sinners. We are sure their intellectual Powers and Capacities are as large and considerable as those of fallen Angels; and we are sure that they are prompted with as ardent Zeal to promote our Salvation, as Devils are by wretched Envy and Malice to secure our Damnation. Nor can

we conceive, that the Devils have a more free Access to our Minds either to suggest evil Thoughts immediately, or by the Mediation of our Fancies, than good Angels have to suggest good and holy Thoughts. So that whatever Methods evil Angels use to entangle or harden us in a Course of Sin, and thereby lead us to Perdition, the like Methods on the other hand may holy Angels use in countermining their Design, and frustrating their Attempts, and rescuing us out of their Power. Those blessed Spirits are said to rejoice in our Conversion, and doubtless they are as forward to promote it by their zealous Endeavours, Luke xv. 10. And they that rejoice in our Conversion will be as ready to farther our Progress in Grace and Holiness, by keeping us out of the Road of Temptation, by suggesting powerful Arguments for repelling those we meet with, by encouraging us in our Duty, strengthening us in our spiritual Conflicts, and supporting us under our Afflictions and Troubles. And if our blessed Saviour himself under his violent Agony needed an Angel to come and strengthen him, — Luke xxii. 43. — (most probably by suggesting some reviving and encouraging Considerations to him) much more are they capable of giving their Assistance to us, and much more may we be supposed to need it. And we have some Ground to suppose that as holy Angels are peculiarly present in our religious Assemblies, so their Ministry is serviceable to promote our Devotion there. The very Posture of the Cherubins over the Mercy-Seat seems to imply the Presence of the holy Angels in all our religious Addresses; and the Reason wherewith the Apostle Paul enforces his Caution to the Christian Women, that they should be veil'd or cover'd in their sacred Assemblies, viz. *Because of the Angels*, intimates to us, That the Consideration of their Presence should engage us to due Decency in our external Behaviour, as the Sense of the divine Presence should engage us to inward Sincerity and Fervour in our Devotions: Nay, Solomon cautions us against Rashness in our solemn Vows from this Consideration, *Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin*, (i. e. by making Vows thou wilt not perform) *neither say thou before the Angel that it was an Error*, Eccles. v. 6. i. e. The Angel of Prayer (as the Jewish Writers expound the Place) who is the Witness of thy Devotions. Nay, holy Angels not only attend us in our Devotions, but are the diligent Spectators and Observers of our whole Conversation; we are in our Christian Warfare a Spectacle to Angels as well as Men, 1 Cor. iv. 9. And the Apostle Paul therefore thought it not improper to charge Timothy not only before God and Jesus Christ, but also before the elect Angels, that he should observe his Instructions, 1 Tim. v. 21. And our blessed Saviour himself threatens to deny those that are ashamed of his Words, not only before his Father, but also before the holy Angels. They then that take such strict Notice of our Deportment and Carriage, must be supposed very assiduous and constant in their Attendance, and ready upon all Occasions to assist us in our pious Designs and Attempts. And we may justly suppose that those blessed Spirits that relieve us in our other Conflicts do not leave us in our most formidable Conflict with our last Enemy; but are then especially serviceable in confirming our Divine Faith and Hope, and relieving us against the Terrors of Death, and assisting us against the violent Assaults of the Powers of Darkness in our last and most difficult struggle with them. And we have very positive Assurance, that those who here promote our final Perseverance in Grace and Holiness, will most gladly do the last Office of Kindness and Friendship in conveying our departing Souls, (as happy Conquerors) not only with Safety, but with Honour and Triumph into the Heavenly Mansions. We read of Angels (even several of that Heavenly Host) being appointed as a Guard to conduct the Spirit of poor Lazarus into Abraham's Bosom, Luke xvi. 22. Nay, their Ministry seems to extend to our very Bodies themselves when in the Grave, for we read of their being employ'd as Agents

in raising them thence. That when the Son of Man shall come in the Heavens with Power and great Glory, he shall send his Angels to gather the Elect from the four Winds, from one End of Heaven to the other, Matt. xxiv. 30, 31.

And this I take to be a brief Summary of what the Scriptures assert concerning the Ministry of holy Angels for the Benefit of the designed Heirs of Salvation. We derive all these real and most valuable Advantages from it.

It remains then that we apply this Subject, and consider the several practical Instructions it suggests to us.

And,

I. We may hence infer, That this Doctrine is so far from giving any Countenance to the Practice of the Roman Church in their Invocation of holy Angels, that it furnishes us with a strong Argument against it.

It gives no just Ground for it.

What tho' Holy Angels are often sent at the pleasure of God to minister to us; will it therefore follow, that we must pray to them, and (as is the common Practice recommended by the Romish Clergy to their Profelytes) solemnly devote our selves to their Worship and Service? Ministers and Magistrates are the Ministers of God for the good of those that are committed to their Charge; may we therefore in the same Place and Posture in which we offer our Prayers to God, make our religious Addresses to them also? The Scriptures are so far from directing us to draw this Inference from it, that they do as solemnly caution us against the worshipping Angels on the one hand, as they clearly assert their ministering to us on the other. Nay, the Apostle speaks of worshipping Angels as a virtual Renunciation of Christ the only Head and Mediator, by whom we must direct all our Addresses to God. Nay, he condemns the very Pretence on which that Worship is founded, viz. voluntary Humility, (or as those of the Romish Church speak) honorary Subjection to Angels on the account of their transcendent Excellencies. And he adds this farther Censure of their Practice, that they intruded into those things they had not seen; Col. ii. 18, 19. A Censure that manifestly agrees to the Romish Church, who so frequently pretend this or that City or Country to be under the Protection and Tutelage of this or that particular Angel or Saint, and so confidently tho' groundlessly assert, that every one has their particular Guardian-Angel, and accordingly urge them by certain Forms of Devotion to commit themselves to their Care, and to implore their Protection. Nay, the Scripture frequently proposes the Blessed God as the only Object of Religious Worship, and cautions us against giving any part of his peculiar Honour to his Creatures. And we cannot excuse the Practice of the Roman Church in praying to Angels, from the Guilt of invading the peculiar Rights of the Divine Honour and Glory. For our Praying to them, and particularly when we offer up mental Prayers (which the Council of Trent particularly allows) supposes them to have that unlimited Knowledge of whatever is done and said here below; nay, that Knowledge of our very Hearts themselves that can only belong unto God. He only ought to be pray'd to, who can hear all our Requests. And as God alone can do so; so to invoke any created Inhabitant of the other World, does in the Nature of the thing, whatever our Intention may be, ascribe the incommunicable Perfections of God to them, and consequently is no better than vile Idolatry. Nay, our praying to any other Inhabitant of the Invisible World, and that in the same Posture we do to God, leaves no external and visible Distinction between the Worship we pay to that Supreme Being, and that we pay to his Creatures.

And as this Doctrine gives no countenance to the Worship of Angels, so on the contrary, it suggests to us a solid Argument against it, and that urg'd by an Angel himself. For when we read of John's falling down at the Angel's Feet to worship him, he rejects what he offer'd from this very Consideration, *see thou do it not, I am thy Fellow-servant, and of thy Brethren that*

that have the Testimony of Jesus, worship God. — Rev. xxii. 8, 9 — So xix. 10 — They are but *ministring Spirits*, *Fellow-servants* with us to the same God, and therefore no way fit *Objects* of our *Homage*; all *Worship* being the *Homage* of a *Subject* to his *Sovereign* and *Lord*. They therefore that have no *Dominion* over us can claim no such *Acknowledgments* of *Subjection* to them. And indeed were it lawful at any time to give an *Angel* any *Religious Homage*, it must be so when he *visibly* appears. But we see here, the *Angel* positively *refuses* it. And none can reasonably entertain so foolish a *Thought* of this inspir'd *Apostle*, as to imagine he mistook him whom he calls an *Angel*, for *God*, or that he wou'd have pay'd him the same *inward Devotion* he paid to that *Ever Blessed Being*. And sure that is but a miserable *Evasion* which one of the great *Champions* of the *Romish Church* here uses, "That the *Angels* out of *Reverence* to the *human Nature* of *Christ* refuse to be worship'd since his *Coming*, but tho' they do well out of *Humility* to refuse it, yet *John* did well to give it, and so do we. For sure if the *Angel* had just *Reason* to refuse it, we have the same not to give it. 'Tis but small *Respect* to *obtrude* it upon them against their *Will*. And doubtless they give the *Church of Rome* little thanks for paying them that *Devotion* that so plainly entrenches both on the *Honour* of *God*, and of *Christ* as *Mediator*. 'Tis plain the *Angel* assigns not his own *Modesty* as a *Reason* of his *Refusal*, but such a *Reason* as supposes it *unlawful*; I am thy *Fellow-servant*, &c. worship *God*, q. d. Thou owe'st me no such *Homage*, who am but thy *Fellow-servant*, give it therefore to *God*, to whom alone 'tis due from us both. And this is a *Reason* common to all *Ages*, and always in force to render this *Practice* *inexcusable*.

II. Let us hence be excited to adore the *Condescension* and *Goodness* of *God* to us in employing *Angels* themselves to minister to us.

And truly when we consider, what despicable Creatures we are, how unworthy of the *Notice* and *Care* of that *Sovereign Majesty*, and especially how undeserving of his *Favours* our undutiful *Carriage* has rendred us, we cannot but esteem it as a *marvellous Instance* of his *gracious Regard* to us, that he shou'd send even those that stand as *Attendants* on his *Heavenly Throne*, to take a particular *Care* of our *Welfare*, and give them a *Charge* for our *Safety* and *Preservation*. Nay, 'tis a wonderful *Expression* of his *Love* which our *Saviour* intimates, when he cautions us against despising one of the least of his *Disciples*, from this *Consideration*, that in *Heaven* their *Angels* do always behold the *Face* of his *Father* in *Heaven*, Matt. xviii. 10. — 'Tis true indeed, I cannot see any clear ground to conclude from hence, that every particular *Christian* has a particular *Angel* assign'd for his *Guardian*, tho' that seems to have been a current opinion among the *Jews* as well as among the *Heathens*. For we some times read of many *Angels* attending one particular *Saint*. A considerable Number attended in the *Vision* of *Jacob's Ladder*, Gen. xxviii. 12. And a numerous *Host* of them surrounded the *Prophet Elijah*, 2 Kings vi. 17. And many were appointed to convey the *Soul* of deceased *Lazarus* to *Abraham's Bosom*, Luke xvi. 22. Nay, the *Psalmist* speaking of every particular good *Man*, saith, he shall give his *Angels* charge over thee, Psal. xci. 11. Whereas elsewhere, One *Angel* was a sufficient *Guard* to the whole *Camp* of *Israel*. So that there seems to be no solid ground for supposing that our *Saviour* design'd in these *Words* to insinuate the *Truth* of that *Opinion*, concerning every good *Man* having a particular *Angel* as his constant *Attendant* or *Guardian*. But I think we may justly infer from the *Words*, that whereas it was common among the *Heathens* to assign a more eminent and powerful *Genius* to their *Princes* and *Hero's* than to other *Persons*, our *Saviour* here intimates on the quite contrary, that the highest of the *Angels*, (even those that were the most immediate *Attendants* on his *Throne*) were often employ'd by him for the *Service* and *Good* of the meanest sin-

cere *Christian*; and therefore 'twere inexcusable for us to despise those on whom *God* puts so great a *Value*, and whom the chiefest *Angels* in obedience to his *Command* disdain not to minister unto. O what an astonishing *Favour* is this to be bestow'd upon such inconsiderable *Worms* as we are! That not only all the *Creatures* below us shou'd be made serviceable to us, but that even the glorious *Inhabitants* of the superior *World*, the chief *Favourites* of the *Heavenly King*, the very *Nobles* of his *Royal Court*, shou'd be sent by him as *ministring Spirits*, to preserve us in our *Dangers*, prosper us in our important *Affairs*, support and strengthen us in our *Conflicts*, to rescue us from *Temptations*, and to promote the great *Design* of our *Eternal Salvation*. We may well on this occasion say (with the devout *Psalmist*) *What is Man, O Lord, that thou art thus mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou visitest him!* That when he is made lower than the *Angels*, yet even they shou'd be thus employ'd to minister to him.

O let us then ascribe the *Glory* hereof unto *God*, and we need not fear that those blessed *Spirits* who are so jealous of his *Honour* should take it for any *Mark* of our *Disrespect* to them, that we adore him alone on this *Account*. He could as easily promote our temporal and eternal *Welfare* by his own immediate *Power* as by their *Ministry*. He uses not their *Services* because he needs them. But 'tis highly congruous to his *Wisdom* that he should employ his *Creatures* in *Services* suited to their *Nature* and *Capacities*, and particularly the higher *Rank* of them in a ministerial *Inspection* and *Care* over the lower. And such an *Employment* is suitable to the *Benignity* of their *Nature*, and gives them the desirable *Occasion* of expressing thereby their *Resemblance* of him who is infinite *Goodness* and *Love* it self. To him then who is the *Lord* of *Angels* as well as *Men*, must our religious *Thanksgiving* and *Praise* be render'd for all the *Benefits* and *Advantages* we derive from those kind *Ministrations* he employs them in.

III. Let us take care, That we be such as may justly expect the *Benefit* of their *gracious Ministry*.

For they are chiefly sent to minister for the *Good* of those that are *Heirs* of *Salvation*; and therefore no wicked *Persons* can promise to themselves any such *Favour*. Those that are the chosen *Vassals* of *Satan*, by becoming the voluntary *Servants* of *Sin*, cannot expect that *God* should give his holy *Angels* charge of them, or commit them to their *Care*. No, they are rather in danger of being entirely abandon'd to the *Power* of those infernal *Spirits*, whose *Temptations* they are so ready to yield to, and whose *Dictates* they so freely obey. And O miserable is the *Case* of those *Children* of *Disobedience* in whom that *Prince* of the *Power* of the *Air* rules and works without *Controul*! Should we see the *Body* of a poor *Creature* possess'd by an infernal *Fiend*? Should we behold him in such a deplorable *Condition* as that of the poor *Man's Son* we read of, Mark ix. 18, 22. whom the unclean *Spirit* sometimes cast into the *Fire*, and sometimes into the *Water*, to destroy him, and so tare him, that he foam'd and gnash'd with his *Teeth*, and pin'd away? Methinks such a sad *Spectacle* would move our *Pity*. But alas, the *Case* of every hardened *Sinner* is altogether as deplorable, whose *Soul*, that unclean *Spirit* has taken *Possession* of, and whom he hurries so violently to the *Commission* of those *Sins* that are far more pernicious and destructive; whom he as it were forces to wound their own *Conscience*, and makes them toyl in the *Drudgery* of *Sin* for the securing their own *Damnation*. O let us not then serve those *Infernal Spirits*, if we wou'd not be subjected to them. Let us become the faithful *Servants* of *God*, if we expect that his Holy *Angels* shou'd be employ'd for our *Protection* and *Defence*, our *Comfort* and *Welfare*. Let us be the sincere *Followers* of our *Blessed Saviour*, if we expect that he who is the *Head* of *Angels* shou'd use their *Ministration* for our good.

IV. Let

IV. Let us draw some Encouragement to our Faith from the Contemplation of the Ministry of the Holy Angels.

When we consider that in our spiritual Warfare, we wrestle not so much against Flesh and Blood as against Principalities and Powers, and Spiritual Wickednesses in High-Places, (or those wicked Spirits that now inhabit these Airy Regions above us;) we are apt to be discourag'd at the view of so formidable Enemies. But we shou'd animate our selves not only by considering the Almighty Power of God himself engag'd for our Defence, but also the Power of those Instruments he employs for our Security. We may argue against our despondent Fears, as the Prophet *Elijah* did against those of his *Servant*, *Fear not, they be more that are with us than those that are with them*, 2 Kings vi. 16. Are those *Infernal Fiends* numerous? There is also an innumerable Company of *Holy Angels*. Their Number is said to be *Ten Thousand times Ten Thousand*, and *Thousands of Thousands*, Rev. v. 11. And of those Attendants on the Throne of God, 'tis said, that *Thousand Thousands minister to him*, and *Ten Thousand times Ten Thousand stand before him*, Dan. vii. 10. Are *Devils* potent and subtle Creatures? So do *Holy Angels* excel both in *Strength* and *Wisdom*. Are *Devils* industrious in seeking all occasions of entangling us in Sin, and promoting our Ruin? And can we think *Holy Angels* less active in their Endeavours to counteract their Design, and promote our Obedience and Salvation? For sure those *Infernal Spirits* have no advantage of doing harm above what *Holy Angels* have of doing us good, unless it be what our own Corruptions may give them. But this cannot be suppos'd the Case of those in whom *Divine Grace* is the prevalent Principle. Nay, how shou'd it arm us against the fear of Death, that our Souls will enter into the unseen World under so powerful a Guard and so safe a Convoy!

V. We may hence learn how to demean our selves towards those *Holy Angels* whom the Blessed God employs as *Ministring Spirits* for our good.

1. For sure none can doubt but we ought to entertain a high Esteem of them, as the most Noble and Glorious Rank of Creatures, in whom the Resemblance of the Divine Perfections does most brightly shine; we may justly honour them as the chief of the Works and Ways of God; nay, we ought to bear a grateful Affection towards them, in consideration of that Freedom and Alacrity with which their Compassion and Kindness towards us, prompts them to comply with the Orders and Commands of their Heavenly Sovereign when he sends them to minister to us. 'Tis no Derogation from the Glory of God to have a thankful Sense of the Kindness of our earthly Benefactors, tho' the Praise of the Benefits we receive, chiefly belongs to God. And sure 'tis no more injurious to his Honour to love those Blessed Spirits for all their Offices of Love to us. Not that we shou'd address our selves to them with any Forms of Thanksgiving, which we have no Warrant for, nor Ground to believe that they can hear and receive. But we shou'd retain an affectionate Sense of the Kindness that those our Fellow-servants bear to us, who are so unworthy of any Relation to them, and so undeserving of that Ministry of theirs which the Blessed God does honour us with.

2. Again, the Consideration of their Ministry to us here, shou'd make us think with Pleasure and Joy of our happy Converse with them in the future State.

We shou'd account it our great Privilege and Happiness, that we are come (in Faith and Hope) to that innumerable Company of Angels, Heb. xii. 22. Let us think with the greater Satisfaction and Comfort of those Heavenly Regions where those Blessed Spirits will be our joyful Associates, that are now our Fellow-servants, and vigilant Guardians. This Flesh is a thick Veil that hides those excellent Creatures from our view. How desirable then shou'd it be to a purify'd Soul to have its Eyes open'd upon all the Glories of the Invisible World, and to see and admire the Wonders of Divine Wisdom in the Government thereof, and

particularly entertain a beneficial Converse with those wise Sages of the Heavenly Court.

3. Again, Let us be sensible of the frequent Presence of the Holy Angels with us in the whole of our Conversation, and particularly in our Acts of publick Devotion. O let us then study to acquit our selves so, that they may be the joyful Spectators and Witnesses of our Fidelity and Diligence in the Service of our common Lord. For they that rejoice in our Conversion will no less rejoice in our Progress and Perseverance in Holiness, and in our final Salvation. And even their Eye upon us as well as that of the Blessed God shou'd kindle in us an Holy Ambition so to behave our selves, as may commend us to their Approbation and Applause, as well as to his gracious Acceptance.

Fourthly and Lastly, Let us propose these ministring Spirits as a Pattern for our Imitation.

We must strive as well as pray, that the Will of God may be done by us on Earth as it is in Heaven. We should therefore propose the Inhabitants of Heaven as our bright Exemplars. And we shou'd endeavour to resemble those Holy Angels, both in general, as they are ministring Spirits, and particularly as they minister to the Heirs of Salvation here below.

As they are in general ministring Spirits.

We shou'd imitate them as they stand always (in procinctu) ready bent and prepar'd to do the Will of God. They are represented as a flaming Fire, to denote the Ardour of their Zeal for the Glory of God: And as full of Wings to denote the Celerity and Speed with which they execute his Commands. With such fervent Zeal, with such forward Diligence shou'd we apply our selves to the doing his Holy Will, and executing his just Commands. They go not but when and whither they are sent, so shou'd we carefully observe the Orders and Instructions of our Heavenly Sovereign. They do his Will with Delight. And so should our Hearts be enlarg'd to run the way of his Commands with all Alacrity.

But we shou'd also imitate Holy Angels.

As they minister to the Heirs of Salvation.

Do the highest Angels themselves not disdain to take care of the meanest Member of Christ here below? Do they cheerfully come down from Heaven to minister to them on Earth? How far then shou'd we be from a proud Contempt of any, even the meanest of our Fellow Christians! How ready and cheerful should we be to stoop to the meanest Offices of Love to promote either their Temporal Welfare, or their Eternal Good. Take heed (saith our Blessed Saviour) how ye despise one of these little ones, for in Heaven their Angels behold the Face of my Father in Heaven, — Mat. xviii. 10. — Shall we think those below our Notice and Converse, or underserving of our beneficent Pity and Love, whom Angels themselves think to be proper Objects of their Care, and delightfully minister unto? How does their admirable Benignity and Goodness, Kindness and Condescension upbraid our nauseous Self-love and foolish Pride! O let us then be as ready as they to protect and defend, to assist and advise, to comfort and support, to succour and relieve the meanest of our Fellow-servants, as these Exalted Spirits are; whose Elevation above us does no way hinder their condescending Ministry to us. Especially shou'd Ministers of the Gospel, who are peculiarly styl'd the Angels of the Churches, resemble those excellent Beings, by dividing their Time between beholding the Face of their Father in Heaven, and ministring to the Heirs of Salvation on Earth.

VI. We may hence infer, What an Honour it is to be a Child of God, and Heir of Salvation.

How despicable soever such may appear in the Eyes of Men, on the Account of the Obscurity and Mean-ness of their external Circumstances, they should be honourable in ours. For their heavenly Father puts such a Value on them, that he makes his Holy Angels themselves ministring Spirits to them. They are here their watchful Guardians and friendly Assistants, and kind Ministers and Comforters; and they are at Death

the

the welcome Messengers to convey them to the heavenly Court, on whom they may look with the like Pleasure as Jacob did on the Waggoners sent to convey him into

Egypt, Gen. xlv. 27. And shall those be mean and contemptible in our Eyes, whom the God of Heaven dignifies with so glorious Attendants and Ministers?

S E R M O N X.

SIN the Instrument of the SINNERS Punishment.

Jer. ii. 19.

Thy own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy Back-slidings shall reprove thee. Know therefore, and see, That it is an evil Thing and bitter that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God; and that my Fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts.

AMONG the various Arguments which the Scripture suggests, to reclaim Men from their sinful Courses, there is none, methinks, should more sensibly affect and touch them, than their Consideration of the genuine Tendency of Sin, to make them miserable and wretched. If Sinners have no Regard to the Glory of God, yet sure they will have some Regard to their own Interest and Welfare; and if as yet they feel not the persuasive Power of Love to God, yet even regular Self-Love should bring them under some Convictions of their own Folly, when they come to see, that in offending God they are doing the greatest Injury to themselves; and that their own Sin shall prove its own bitter Punishment. And this Argument my Text gives me just Ground to urge and enforce upon them.

The blessed God had, at the 13th Verse, charg'd the Jews with committing two great Evils, *The forsaking him the Fountain of living Waters, and the hewing to themselves broken Cisterns that could hold no Water*; i. e. They had revolted from him the true God, to the Worship of some Pagan Idol, and thereby changed their Glory for that which does not profit, Ver. 11. And what was the Consequence and Fruit of this? They are told, that for this Israel became a Servant, and an home-born Slave, &c. Even a Servant to that Nation, whose wretched Idols they had chosen to worship and serve. Upon which, the Prophet appeals to themselves, concerning the Equity of this their Punishment, *Hast thou not procured this to thy self, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God when he led thee by the way?* Ver. 17. Nay, their Sin was the more aggravated, because this Judgment did not reform them, but they still rely'd on any other Nations for Help, rather than on God. And now what hast thou to do in the Way of Egypt to drink the Water of Sihor! Or, what hast thou to do in the Way of Assyria to drink the Waters of the River? Sihor was a River in Egypt, and Euphrates is here call'd by way of Eminency, *The River*. The Meaning is, what hast thou to do to make either the Egyptians or Assyrians thy Refuge, and to fly to them for Succour and Relief, rather than to the God of Israel, that true Fountain of living Waters?

Upon this, the Prophet denounces this awful Doom from God upon them, *Thy own Wickedness shall correct thee, and thy own Back-slidings shall reprove thee, &c.*

In the Text, we have the Sinner's Work, his own Wickedness, his own Back-slidings, his forsaking of God and casting off his Fear. And we have his Wages, even that Correction and Reproof, that evil and bitter Fruit that shall spring from his Sins themselves.

The Subject then, which the Words offer to our Meditation is this, viz.

When Men forsake God, and cast off the Fear of him, they shall sooner or later feel the Fruits of their own Wickedness to be exceeding evil and bitter, their own Sin shall turn to their Punishment.

Before I enter upon the Consideration of this Argument, I would only premise, that the Text chiefly speaks of such as go on in a Course of unrepented Wickedness, in a wilful Defection from God, and from his Service. But yet we may apply it also to the woful temporary Back-slidings of his Children, whom he often uses this wise Method to reclaim and recover, by making them know and see in the bitter Fruits of it, how evil a Thing it was in any Degree to depart from him and cast off his Fear. So that the Correction or Punishment is either Medicinal or Destructive, accordingly as Men do or do not repent of their Wickedness.

But what I would chiefly recommend to your Observation, is, That 'tis not barely meant, that such as forsake God and cast off his Fear, shall find their Correction and Punishment for their Wickedness, (i. e. on the Account of it, as the meritorious and procuring Cause of their Misery); but they shall find it in their own Doings, i. e. Their own Wickedness and Back-slidings shall be the Instruments of their Correction and Punishment. Their Wickedness it self shall be the Source of their Misery.

And this Observation from the Words is parallel to many other Passages of Scripture that speak to the same Purpose.

Thus when the Prophet Isaiah denounces a Wo to the Wicked, he assigns this Reason of it, *It shall be ill with him, for the Reward of his Hands shall be given him*, Isaiah iii. 11. His Punishment shall be the Wages that he himself has taken Pains for, and, as it were, pull'd with his own Hands upon his own Head. So when Solomon describes that penal Misery and Ruin which all those would bring upon themselves, who hated Knowledge, and did not choose the Fear of the Lord, who would have none of his Council, but despised all his Reproof, he does it in those remarkable Expressions, *That they should eat the Fruit of their own Way, and be filled with their own Devices*, Prov. i. 30, 31. What is particularly said of the malicious Man, may be applied often to other Sinners, That while they travel with Iniquity, and conceive Mischief, they fall into the Pit which themselves have made, Psal. vii. 14, 15. or, (as the Psalmist elsewhere speaks of the Wicked in general) they are snared in the Work of their own Hands, Psal. ix. 15. I shall only add two observable Passages more, the one is, what God speaks to Cain upon the Murder of his innocent

innocent Brother, *If thou do not well, Sin or Punishment lies at the Door*, Gen. iv. 7. The other is, what Moses speaks to the Israelites, *If you do not so, behold, ye have sinned against the Lord, and be sure your Sin will find you out*, Numb. xxxii. 22. And 'tis no impertinent Observation of a pious Divine, upon the comparing those two Passages, that, in the former, Sin is compar'd to a Mastiff that lies behind the Door, ready to fly upon any that open it; but, in the latter, 'tis compar'd to a Blood-hound that traces the Sinner in his Foot-steps, and never leaves the Scent and Track till at last it find him out and seize upon him.

You see then the Observation drawn from this Text receives Light and Confirmation from other Passages of Scripture that speak to the same Purpose.

What I shall therefore chiefly offer to your Consideration from these Words, is to illustrate the Truth of this Observation, by shewing you in particular, what evil and bitter Fruits such as forsake God do usually reap from their own Sins, how their own Wickedness does correct them, and their own Back-slidings reprove them, how their Sin turns to their Punishment.

And here I must distinctly consider the evil and bitter Fruits of Men's Wickedness in this Life, and then the more intolerable Fruits of their impenitent Continuance therein in the Life to come.

First, Let us consider the evil and bitter Fruits which the Wickedness of Men does usually produce in this Life, when they forsake God, and cast off his Fear.

And here we may consider these bitter Fruits of Sin as springing, partly from the Nature and Tendency of Sin it self, from the Workings of Conscience in the Review of it, from the wise and just Conduct of divine Providence towards the Sinner, and from the Tempter's Malice and Subtily.

I. We may here consider the evil and bitter Fruits that spring from the Nature and Tendency of Sin it self.

And among those evil Fruits, I may justly reckon such as these: The Hardship and Slavery that the Sinner is expos'd to in the prosecution of his Wickedness and Sin, the Disappointment he usually meets with in the Commission of it, the Shame that attends the Discovery, and the woful Difficulty of making a Retreat.

1. One wretched fruit of Men's Wickedness, is the Hardship and Slavery they often undergo in the prosecution of their sinful Course.

And O what a shameful and ignominious, what a painful and miserable Vassalage and Drudgery do the Lusts of Men usually put them upon! How is the wretched Sinner at the beck and command of every brutish Appetite, every vile and hateful Passion! How does he tug at the Oar of Sin, and toyl for his own Damnation! What hateful Dissimulation, what servile Flattery, what tedious Attendance, what vile Cringing must the Ambitious use to insinuate themselves into the Favour of those on whom their Hopes of Preferment depend! What restless Projects and incessant Toyls does the covetous Worldling use, how does he rise early and sit up late, and eat the Bread of Carefulness, and what base Arts, what mean and fordid things does his insatiable Desire of Riches usually put him upon! Nay often, how little does he himself enjoy of what he has thus drudg'd the greatest part of his Life to hoard up for he knows not whom! How often is he Poor in the midst of Plenty! Starving his Belly and pinching his Back to feed his insatiable Eye! Having Wealth indeed in his Chests but no Heart or Power to use it! And for the unclean Wretch, what Hazards and Difficulties does he run thro', what base and shameful Contrivances does he use to compass his vile Designs! So that if Sinners did but consider, what odious and scandalous, what painful and difficult, and tedious Servitude their Lusts put them upon: Methinks their Hearts shou'd rise up in just Detestation and Abhorrence of it, and shou'd be ready to say, "I disdain henceforth to be so miserable a Slave to so imperious Task-Masters, and will be

employ'd no longer in so ignominious and intolerable Drudgery.

Again,

2. Another evil and bitter Fruit of Men's Wickedness is the Disappointment they usually meet with in the Commission of it.

And alas, how far is Sin from answering those large Expectations the Sinner entertains of Satisfaction in the Gratification of his corrupt Inclinations and Desires! How usually does he find nothing but Vanity and Vexation in what he propos'd to himself all imaginable Pleasure and Delight! We have a lively Instance of this in the Case of foolish Amnon. What Torment did his incestuous Lust towards his Sister Tamar expose him to! The Text tells us, *he was so vexed that he fell sick for her, because he thought it hard for him to do any thing to her*. — 2 Sam. xiii. 2. — But when in Pursuance of Jonadab's wicked Advice, he did by Stratagem gain his point, and offer'd Violence to her, what Satisfaction did he find in so vile an Action? The Text tells us, *that he hated her exceedingly, so that the Hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the Love wherewith he loved her, and he said to her, Arise, and be gone*, Verse 15. His proposed Pleasure was soon turn'd into Vexation, and the imaginary Sweet of Sin prov'd only Wormwood and Gaul. Some Sins carry their own Torment along with them. So does that Malice and Hatred, that Envy and Rancour that prey upon the Breast that entertains them. So does that Pride that renders every appearance of Slight and Disrespect so grievous and intolerable. As we see in the Case of Haman, to whom all Honours heap'd upon him in the Court of Ahasuerus avail'd nothing, so long as Mordecai refus'd to bow the Knee to him, Esther v. 13. And sure I need not tell you, how little real Pleasure the Glutton or Drunkard finds in overloading Nature with nauseous Excess. And how just a Correction of his Folly those painful Diseases are which his Intemperance so often exposes him to. Not to mention that Consumption and Ruin that this expensive Vice so often brings upon his Substance and Estate.

Again,

3. Another evil and bitter Fruit of Men's Wickedness is the Shame that usually attends the Discovery of it.

And this indeed does chiefly refer to those Sins which they are studious to conceal from the View of others. How restless and disquieting Thoughts does the very Fear of a Detection usually expose them to! And what confounding Shame does usually cover them, when their hidden Works of Darkeness are brought to open Light! If innocent Tamar that suffer'd the Violence could say, *And I, whither shall I cause my Shame to go?* How much more may we say to the guilty Sinner in the Language of the Apostle, *What Fruit hadst thou in those things whereof thou art now asham'd?* Rom. vi. 22. 'Tis a just Observation, that Men's secret Sins owe them a Shame, and will usually, (at least without Repentance) some time or other pay it. What they studiously cover shall be some way or other reveal'd; what they industriously hide shall, to their Confusion, be made known, Matt. x. 26. They will find the Truth of the wise Man's Assertion, *He that covers his Sins shall not prosper; but he that confesses and forsakes them shall find Mercy*, Prov. xxviii. 13. And sure, if the Sinner would but put the Reproach and Disgrace that attends the Discovery of Sin in the one Scale, and the imaginary Pleasure of it in the other, he would soon find that the latter is far outweigh'd by the former. And what Solomon speaks in reference to one particular Sin, (*viz.* that of Uncleaness) may be apply'd to all other heinous and hateful Crimes that the Sinner ventures upon when he casts off the Fear of God, *A Wound and Dishonour shall they get, and their Reproach shall not be wip'd away*, Prov. vi. 33.

4. Another evil Fruit of Sin is the extream Difficulty of making a Retreat.

The Way of Sin is indeed broad, and the Entrance upon it exceeding easy. But we may truly say of it, (as it was said of the Lyons-Den) *vestigia pauca retrorsum*. There are comparatively few that have made an happy Escape. Alas, little does the Sinner consider how far he does by yielding to one Temptation strengthen his corrupt Inclinations, rivet his vicious Habits, and put himself into the Power of the Tempter, who neglects no Advantages for establishing his own Dominion and Interest in his Heart! We read of the Wicked, *That his own Iniquities shall take him, and he shall be snared in the Work of his own Hands*, Prov. v. 22. The Sinner seems to be describ'd here as one that after he has yielded to Temptation and run into Sin, would now make a *Recess* and Return to his Duty; but alas, he finds himself *held in Cords*, so that when he would (as one speaks) unwind the Skein of his former Life, he runs but more into the Entanglement he has made with his own Hands. Satan and Sin have got a strong hold of him, and he finds it harder than ever to wrest himself out of their Power. His Corruptions become more rooted and inveterate, and the Resistance of Conscience is weakened; so that his Recovery is more *hopeless*, and almost *desperate*.

Thus is Sin its own Punishment by the natural Tendency of it to produce such evil and bitter Fruits as these. But,

II. We may farther take notice of the bitter and evil Fruits of Sin in the Workings of natural Conscience upon the Review of it.

Wickedness may indeed be (as Zophar speaks, — Job xx. 12, &c.) *sweet in the Mouth*, and the Sinner may *hide it under his Tongue*, but this *Meat* will be *turned in his Bowels*, and prove as the *Gall of Asps* within him, (i. e. a bitter and deadly Poyson.) * Conscience has such Notices not only of the Being of God, but of moral Good or Evil, and of the Rewards and Punishments thereof, that in the very Heathens themselves 'tis said to *accuse or excuse*, Rom. ii. xv. And much more will it do so where 'tis more fully enlightned from the Word of God. And therefore the Sinner can never hope to escape the *Reproaches* and *Censures* of his own awakened Conscience. He carries at once, a *Witness*, a *Judge*, and a *Tormentor* in his own Bosom. The Pleasure of Sin is indeed soon over, but the Sting of it remains, and the Wounds it has given to Conscience will, on every serious Reflection, *bleed afresh*. The Sinner sows those *Seeds* in his own Mind by every wilful Sin, that will sooner or later spring up in *Anguish* and *Remorse*, in guilty *Horrors* and *Fears*. We read in Ezra of a Decree of King Darius, *That whoever should alter it, Timber should be pull'd down from his own House, and being set up, he should be hang'd thereon*, Ezra vi. 11. So is it the just Decree of Heaven, That for every wilful Transgressor of his Law, *Materials* should be drawn from his own Conscience, like *Timber* from his own House, for his Execution and Punishment. And there is no such *Gibbet* or *Rack* as a Man's own guilty Conscience.

But of this more will occur when I come to consider the bitter Fruits of Sin in the other World.

But farther,

III. We may consider the bitter Fruits of Sin as they spring from the wise and just Conduct of divine Providence towards the Sinner.

I have already suggested, that some Sins tend in their own Nature to make us miserable here. Such as *Malice*, *Envy*, *Pride*, &c.

And I would now add, that the Providence of God does often wonderfully concur to make the Sinner feel the wretched and pernicious Effects of his own Folly. Thus we read of the young Prodigal, that he quickly spent his Substance in riotous Living, and thereby reduc'd himself to Beggary and Want. — But the Providence of God concurr'd to make his own Wickedness correct him, when, at the same time, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land, that increas'd his Necessities, and render'd them the more pinching and grievous. So Absalom

took a *Pride* in his Beauty, and particularly in his long Hair. And Providence so orders it, that in his Rebellion against his Father, when he had lost the Day, this Hair in his Flight catches on the Bough of a Tree, where Joab found and slew him. As earthly Judges often order Offenders to be executed in the very Place where their Crimes were committed, so the just Providence of God so disposes Matters, that either as to the Kind or Measure, or the Time and Place, the Punishment should bear a Correspondence to the Sin, and remarkably appear to be the Fruit of it. As Joseph's Brethren were no sooner reduc'd into extreme Distress by their being thrown into Prison, and order'd to bring their youngest Brother as the only Condition of their Release, but they sensibly own it as the Fruit of their own Sin, in their refusing to hear their Brother Joseph, when he besought them, and when they saw the Anguish of his Soul, Gen. xlii. 21.

Once more,

IV. We may consider the evil and bitter Fruits of Sin, as they spring from the Malice and Subtlety of the Tempter.

For 'tis our own corrupt Inclinations that render us so easie a Prey to that great Destroyer of Souls. 'Tis our Eagerness after his specious Baits that makes us so readily swallow the fatal Hook that is under them. One well compares this World to a Decoy-pool. Satan is the Keeper of the Pool. The Vanities of this World are the Decoys that inveigle and draw such Shoals of Sinners after them. But when they think to enjoy them, these Vanities, like the Decoys, all dive away and are gone, and Satan drawing his Net, they are all taken. So that as the Fishes that are taken in an evil Net, or as the Birds that are caught in the Snare, so are the Sons of Men snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them, Eccles. ix. 11. 'Tis our own Lusts betray us into the Hands of that great Enemy and Destroyer of Souls. 'Tis thro' their Strength and Prevalency as well as his Sagacity to suit his alluring Temptations to them, that we are taken captive by him at his Pleasure. And herein also our Sin turns to our Punishment.

By all these ways does Mens own Wickedness correct, and their own Back-slidings reprove them. Thus do they often here know, and see, and feel, what an evil and bitter thing it is that they have forsaken the Lord their God, and that his Fear was not in them.

But,

Secondly, Let us consider, for the Illustration of this Truth, the intollerably bitter Fruits of Sin in the Life to come, and it will appear, That their own Wickedness does correct, and their own Back-slidings reprove them, and their Punishment is the genuine Result and Fruit of their own Impenitency.

And here I shall not insist on that Connexion between Wickedness and endless Misery that is made by the Tenure of the righteous Threatnings of God, which do subject all impenitent Sinners to everlasting Punishment. For I shall only consider how far that Punishment is the natural Result and Fruit of their own Wickedness.

And, to clear the Truth of this Observation, in reference to the endless Punishment of Sinners in the other World, we may consider it as distinguish'd into Punishment of Loss, and Punishment of Sense, or into privative and positive Punishment.

I. As to privative Punishment, that consists in the Loss of the heavenly Happiness and Glory, this is the genuine Result and Fruit of Mens obstinate Wickedness.

For by such incorrigible Wickedness the Sinner does render himself morally incapable of that heavenly Felicity, and puts an insuperable Bar in the way of his enjoying it. Such is the vile and debased and malignant Temper of an impenitent Sinner, that he would be but miserable tho' surrounded with all the Objects of Happiness; and those Mansions of Glory would be to him the Place of Torment. Alas, what Pleasure could an unsanctify'd Soul find in the Presence and Communion of that God to whom it bears no Resemblance, whose Holiness it hates, whose Justice it trembles at the Thoughts

Thoughts of, and in whose Sight 'tis most hateful and abominable! What other Doom can he who has here said to God, *Depart from me, I desire not the Knowledge of thy ways*, expect from him but that, *Depart from me thou cursed for ever?* Job xxi. 14. compared with Matt. xxv. 41.

What Satisfaction can such an impure Sinner take in the Society and Converse of those glorify'd Saints, to whose spotless Nature he bears no Conformity, whose Heavenly Employment and Exercise is no way agreeable to his carnal Inclinations, and whose spiritual and divine Joys he has no Palate to relish and taste? As soon may a Swine that is us'd to the Mire and Druff relish the Entertainments of an earthly Palace, as a brutify'd Sinner take Delight in the Conferences and Entertainments of the heavenly Community and Kingdom. Those spiritual and divine Objects are no way suited to his sordid and terrene, his corrupt and vicious Inclinations.

Now this irreparable Loss of Heaven is what the Sinner's own Folly exposes him to. 'Tis he incapacitates his own Soul for that eternal Glory; 'tis he that fixes that unpassable Gulf that for ever separates and excludes him from the Regions of the Blessed.

Nay, farther,

II. As to the positive Part of the Punishment of impenitent Sinners in the other World, 'tis also in a great measure the genuine Fruit of their own Wickedness.

There are three Ingredients of the Punishment of Sense that we may now conceive of, and they are all the genuine Product and Fruit of the Sinner's own Wickedness.

For that weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth, which Sinners will then be abandon'd to, when they see themselves thrust out of the Kingdom of God, this will naturally arise from the Reflections of an enraged Conscience on their wretched Folly, who have sold their heavenly Birth-right for a Morsel of Meat, and barter'd away the Hopes of that unconceivable Felicity for contemptible Trifles. They will have none to blame for that irreparable Loss but themselves, and the Edge of Conscience in its cutting Reflections on it will be wholly turn'd upon themselves.

And for that Part of the Punishment of the Damned which will arise from the Accusations and Stings of their own guilty Consciences, 'tis evident, that they bring this upon themselves.

'Tis they that have furnish'd an accusing Conscience with such a heavy Indictment and Charge; 'tis they that have arm'd it against themselves; 'tis they that by the innumerable Offences of an ungodly Life, have been sowing those Seeds that will then spring up in everlasting Anguish and Shame, Horror and Despair. 'Tis their past Iniquities that supply Food to the Worm that never dies, and Fuel to the Fire that shall never be quench'd, Mark ix. 46, 48.

And for that part of their Punishment which arises from their impetuous carnal Desires after those earthly Enjoyments which they are now for ever dispossest of, 'tis as manifest that this part of their Torment is the Fruit of their own Wickedness. 'Tis they have kindled and cherish'd those impure Flames in which they are now tormented, without one Drop of Water to cool their Tongue. 'Tis they have debas'd their Affections, and suffer'd them to be so inordinately enamour'd on this vain World, that the Loss of it now appears so intolerable to them. They could not but foresee that the Form and Fashion of this World was passing away, and were on that Account warn'd against the inordinate Love of it, and therefore can thank none but themselves that they are now miserable by insatiable Desires after what they are never like to enjoy.

Nay, 'tis the Conformity of their malignant Disposition to that of accursed Fiends that fits them to be their Associates in the Regions of Darkness and Despair.

On all these Accounts it appears, that even in reference to the endless Punishment of Sinners in the

other World, their own Wickedness corrects them, and they feel in these genuine Fruits thereof what an evil and bitter thing it is, that they have forsaken the Lord their God, and that his Fear was not in them.

It now remains that we apply this practical Subject.

And,

I. We may hence see, and vindicate, and admire the Wisdom and Justice of God in the Punishment of Sin.

'Tis one great Instance of his admirable Wisdom that he has so constituted the Nature of Man as to establish an inseparable Connexion between Holiness and Happiness, between Wickedness and Misery. Holiness is that to the Soul that Health is to the Body, the Foundation and Spring of all inward Peace and Comfort. Wickedness is its Disease, usually painful and (if Repentance prevent not) mortal and pernicious. The great GOD has so contriv'd the Frame of his moral Government, that we cannot affront him without doing the greatest Injury to our selves, and by every wilful Provocation of him we sow the Seeds of Shame and Fear, Disquiet and Terror in our own Minds.

Nay, this Consideration offers the clearest Ground for vindicating the Justice of God in the eternal Punishment of the Damned. I shall not exclude such Arguments as are drawn from the infinite Majesty of God that is affronted by Sin, from that everlasting Punishment being the Sinner's own Option and Choice, from the Necessity of such a Punishment being threatned in order to deter Men from Sin, from the Inclination of impenitent Sinners to persist in their Sins for ever; &c. But this seems to be the most solid Argument, and that which renders the Justice of God most unexceptionable; that to immortal Souls this everlasting Punishment is the natural Result and Fruit of their own Wickedness; that Wickedness rendering them incapable of the heavenly Felicity, and sowing the Seeds of all that positive Misery and Torment which they suffer. And what Blemish or Stain can it be on the Justice of God to leave the incorrigible Sinner to the natural Effects of his own Perverseness and Folly, and to suffer him to eat the Fruit of his own Doings? How equal is it that Sinners reap what themselves have sown, and should inherit that Destruction which they have with violent Hands pull'd down upon themselves? And how unreasonable were it to expect that God should extinguish the Life of those Souls that were design'd for an endless Duration, merely to prevent the Misery they have wilfully plung'd themselves into?

II. We may hence farther infer, That 'tis a most dreadful Judgment for a Man to be left to his own Wickedness and his own Back-slidings.

For there needs no more to render him for ever miserable. That Wickedness will sooner or later correct him, and those Back-slidings will reprove him; he will sooner or later feel the Fruits of them to be exceedingly evil and bitter. 'Tis an awful Sentence when God saith of a Sinner, as he once did of Ephraim, *He is join'd to Idols, let him alone*, Hof. iv. 17. When he gives them up to the Lusts of their own Hearts, and saith of them, *Let the Unrighteous be unrighteous still, and the Filthy be filthy still*, Rev. xxii. 11. And O what need have we to pray that God would deliver us from our selves, and from the natural Effects of our own Sin and Folly!

III. We may hence see, How little Reason we have to envy the present Prosperity of Sinners.

Alas, their own Wickedness is their Plague, and carries its Punishment as it were in its own Bowels. We see indeed their external flourishing Condition, we hear the Noise of their carnal Jollity and Mirth, but we discern not their inward Terrors and Fears, much less do we discern that everlasting Anguish and Despair which they are sowing the Seeds of, that Wrath which after their hard and impenitent Heart they are treasuring up against the Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God. 'Tis observed, that the Romans in their solemn Triumphs after a Victory, were wont to bring out the Captives they triumph'd over in all

their most splendid Attire and Ornaments, and led them in that Pomp to Execution. One that understood nothing of the Design might think those the most *admired* and *happy Persons* in all the Company, whereas indeed they were the most *wretched*, being thus *adorn'd* only in scorn for an ignominious Death. So do we often in our Ignorance look upon prosperous Sinners when surrounded with earthly Honours and Riches, as the most *happy Persons*, whereas did we judge a-right of things, we should see that they are far more proper Objects of our *Pity* than our *Envy*; they are but as *Beasts fatted for the Day of Slaughter*, and as *Malefactors led out in Pomp to Execution*.

IV. We may hence see, *How impossible it is that impenitent Sinners should go unpunish'd*.

Alas, they are by their manifold Transgressions laying the certain *Foundation* of their own *Misery*. They are industrious in sowing the Seeds from whence a sad Harvest of Anguish and Misery will spring. They are often busily employ'd to undo themselves here, but especially laborious in securing their own endless Perdition. They are taking great pains to arm an enraged Conscience with bitter and furious Stings. They are like poor distracted Creatures that are *gashing and wounding* themselves, tho' perhaps they at present *feel* it not. But in due time, *their Wickedness shall correct them, and their Back-slidings reprove them*, and they shall to their cost *see and know*, that 'tis an evil and bitter thing that they have forsaken the Lord their God, and that his Fear was not in them. They will feel Sin to be the *Gall of Bitterness* it self whenever Conscience is by some terrible Calamity startled and alarm'd, whenever Death and Judgment are in their view, or at least whenever they come to reap the miserable Fruits of it in the World to come. O with what Horrour and Anguish will they then look back on those momentary Pleasures of Sin for which they have barter'd away the hopes of Eternal Glory! With what Amazement and Consternation will they look forward on that State of remediless Darknefs and Despair that is before them! In which there is no *Glimpse* of *Light* and *Hope*, nothing to expect but the *Gnawings* of the *Worm that never dies*, and the *Rage* of the *unquenchable Fire*!

And that which will greatly aggravate their Misery, is, That 'tis *self-procur'd*, 'tis the natural Result of their own Wickedness. This their Destruction is from *themselves*. Divine Justice has little more to do than to leave them to the woful Effects of their own wilful Departure from him.

V. Let me therefore hence *urge Sinners to entertain such just Apprehensions of the miserable Tendency of their own Wickedness, as may excite them to abhor and renounce it*.

One would think 'twere an easy matter to dissuade a Man from doing an apparent Mischief to himself. But O that we could prevail with deluded Sinners to forbear the doing the greatest and most durable Injury to their own Souls. To this Purpose I would urge them to reflect upon their *past Iniquities*, and to consider what *Advantage* and *Benefit*, what solid *Pleasure* or *Profit* they have reap'd from them? What have you ever got by Sin that can any way counter-vail the miserable Consequences and Fruits of it? What have you got worth the Toil of Prosecution,

answerable to your Expectation? What, that will compensate for all the Fear of *Shame* from *Men*, or of *Vengeance* from *God*? What, that will make amends for all the Challenges and Rebukes of an accusing Conscience? What, that will compensate for the Loss of eternal Glory, or support you under the Horrors of everlasting Despair! Alas, what is the momentary *Sweet* of Sin when roll'd in the *Mouth*, when it will prove in the *Belly* as the *Gall of Asps* for ever? And who would continue a perverse *Enemy* to *God*, when all he shall get by it is to be the *worst Enemy* imaginable to himself? Who would tug at the *Oar* of Sin, when he is all the while *toiling* for his own *Misery* and *Damnation*? Who would gratify the Tempter's *Malice* and his own *Lusts* at the Expence of his own eternal *Ruin*? There is a Passage mention'd that happen'd in the Time of *Galienus* the Roman Emperor. The mutinous Soldiers set up several *Competitors* with him. Among the rest, one *Marius*, that was a common *Soldier*, and had been a *Sword-Cutler* by Trade. But, within three Days, they mutiny'd again, and, one of the Soldiers drawing his *Sword* to strike him, cry'd out, "Here, *Marius*, *This is with the Sword which thy self hast made*." So may Satan upbraid us when he is made the Executioner of God's Vengeance against us, That he smites us with the *Sword* which we our selves have made, our own Sins being the Instruments of our Torment and Ruin.

O let us then learn to entertain a just Detestation of Sin. Let us regard it as the just *Spring* of all our *penal Evils*. Let the lively Conviction of its wretched Fruits embitter it to us, and divorce our Affections from it. Let us be as unwilling knowingly to venture upon it, (even when cover'd with the most specious Bait) as to drink of that *delicious Cup* into which we know that a *deadly Poyson* is infus'd.

VI. Let me hence *caution the Children of God against any wilful Relapses into Sin*.

If ever you have felt the *Pangs* of the *New-Birth*, you have in some measure known and felt how *evil* and *bitter* a thing Sin is. And sure you should be afraid of hugging that *Serpent* again whose painful and poysonous *Stings* you have felt before. And know, that if the *Cords* of *divine Love* do not draw you to your Duty, if more *ingenuous* Arguments will not engage you to Constancy in it, a just God will, in the wise Methods of his Providence, make your own *Sin correct*, and your own *Back-slidings reprove* you. You shall *know and see*, by sad Experience, how *evil* and *bitter* a thing it is to forsake him and cast off his Fear. He has many ways to do it. He may expose your Follies to your publick Shame and Reproach. He may abandon you to your own uncomfortable Darknefs and Fears when you have eclips'd the Light of his Countenance. He may turn your Iniquities into *Twigs*, and make of them a *smarting Rod* to chastize you. O then take care to prevent the Severity of his fatherly Discipline by a cautious Fear and Dread of every known and presumptuous Sin. Beware of any wilful Transgression, lest your indulged Iniquity should sooner or later, to your bitter Cost, *find you out*. Remember that *Innocence* is as much preferable even to *true Repentance*, as *continued Health* is to a *dangerous Disease* and a *painful Cure*.

S E R M O N XI.

Concerning OFFENCES or SCANDALS.

Matt. xviii. 7.

Wo to the World because of Offences ; For it must needs be that Offences come, but Wo to that Man by whom the Offence cometh.

Σκάνδαλα.

O clear the Occasion and Scope of this remarkable Passage, we must look back as far as the Beginning of this Chapter. We find there our Lord's Disciples accosting him with this Question, *Who is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? i. e. Who shall have the highest Preferment and Dignity in the Messiah's Kingdom?* Our Lord to rebuke this their Ambition and Pride that made them affect such external Dignity and Preheminence, as they fancy'd the Messiah would advance his Followers to, sets a Child before them as an Emblem and Pattern of Humility; and plainly tells them, that a Resemblance to Children in Humility, was a necessary Qualification of all that should be admitted to the Privileges of his Kingdom: And the more exemplary any one is for Humility, the greater he should be there. And upon this Occasion he tells them, *That whosoever should receive such a little Child (even one of the meanest of his Disciples) in his Name, would be construed as receiving him.* Whereas, *whosoever should offend or scandalize one of those little ones that believ'd in him, 'twere better that a Mill-stone was hang'd about his Neck, and he were drown'd in the Sea; i. e. Our Lord will interpret our cordial Respect and Kindness in receiving the least of his Disciples as such, as a Mark of our sincere Respect and Affection to himself.* Whereas, if any Man shall, thro' his proud Contempt of them, or haughty Carriage towards them, or any other Way be the guilty Cause of their Stumbling and Fall, it were better that he himself were sunk into the Sea with a Mill-stone about his Neck. The Words allude to a Punishment which was not only us'd among the Greeks, and sometimes among the Romans, but (as a learned Author, Dr. Allix, shows) the Jews sometimes did (ἀναδύματα in Mare Sodomæ dejicere lapide annexo) cast execrable Persons into the dead Sea with a Stone ty'd to them. So dangerous a Thing our Lord intimates it would be for any Man to cause the Stumbling and Fall of the meanest of his Disciples. And upon this Occasion he adds these Words, *Wo to the World because of Offences, &c.*

In order to our clearing the Sense of this Passage, we must a little enquire, what our Lord intends by Offences or Scandals? (For it is in the Original Σκάνδαλα).

Ans. By Offences or Scandals, we must by no means understand, every Word, or Action, or Omission of ours that may be displeasing to others, and particularly to weak Christians; because they may, thro' their culpable Ignorance, be displeas'd or offended with us, for doing

what is our important and necessary Duty. As we know the Judaizing were thus offended with the Gentile-Christians, for their not observing the Rites of the Mosaic Law, in opposition whereto, it was the real Duty of those Gentile-Christians to stand fast in their Christian Liberty, see Gal. v. 1.

An Offence or Scandal does in the Language of Scripture, properly signify a Stumbling-block, or Occasion of falling to others.

Not that every Word or Action of ours, which others may unreasonably and perversly misconstrue, and turn into an Occasion or Temptation to falling thro' such groundless Mis-interpretation of it, is such an Offence or Scandal as our Lord here speaks of. This is what we call Scandal taken, but not given. Thus our Lord's Cross or ignominious Sufferings were a Scandal or Stumbling-block to the Jews, and a sad Occasion of their Unbelief. But this was wholly thro' their Default, and therefore only a Scandal taken, not given. Whereas the Scandal in the Text, must be something said, or done, or omitted by us, that has a plain, and natural, and sinful Tendency, to occasion the Stumbling and Fall of others; so that if they do so stumble and fall, we are in part the guilty Causes of it, by having set such a dangerous Snare and Temptation in their Way. Nay, the Scandal may be given by us, and we chargeable with it, when 'tis not taken by others, nor their Fall occasion'd by it. As Peter, by his Advice to our Lord, against exposing himself to the Sufferings he foretold he must undergo, did set such a Stumbling-block in his way, tho' his Advice was rejected. And upon his giving him the Advice, our Lord tells him, *Thou art an Offence (or Scandal) to me, Matt. xvi. 23. i. e. Thou wouldst by thy carnal Advice, tending to divert me from the Prosecution of my great Design for the Redemption of Sinners, lay a dangerous Stumbling-Block in my way.* But the Case is the worse, when the Scandal is both given and taken, i. e. When we both lay the Occasion of Falling in the way of others, and they do actually stumble and fall. For we are in that Case chargeable with their Guilt, having been very sinfully accessory to it. And therefore our Lord here denounces a solemn Woe against such by whom the Offence (or Scandal) comes, and a Woe to the World because of them. It being our great Sin if we lay such a Stumbling-block in the way of others, and the Misery of the World, that so many are in danger of falling thereby.

An Offence or Scandal is then some Word, or Action, or Omission of ours, known to others, that has a natural and sinful Tendency to occasion their Fall.

When

When I say to occasion their Fall, I mean either their Fall into open Infidelity in opposition to the Christian Faith, or into open Irreligion and Wickedness, in opposition to the Holiness which the Gospel requires; or their Fall into some particular Error or Sin, in opposition to the Purity of Christian Faith or Practice.

The Offence or Scandal, which is most frequently mention'd in the New-Testament, and which the Text it self has a principal Reference to, is such a *Stumbling-block* laid by us in the way of others, as tends either to hinder them from receiving or obeying the Gospel, or to make them fall from that Faith and Obedience they have once profess'd. And Men are then especially said to be scandaliz'd, when such a *Stumbling-block* and *Temptation*, which is sinfully laid by others in their way, does occasion their rejecting Christianity, or their Apostacy from it, after a former Profession of it; and that either by making Shipwreck of the Faith, or putting away a good Conscience, or both.

Thus our Lord saith, Matt. xi. 6. *Blessed is he that is not offended (or scandaliz'd) in me, i. e. Is not hindered from receiving me and my Gospel, by taking any occasion of Distaste at my Person, or Doctrine, or the Circumstances of my Life or Death, &c.* So we read of those Hearers compar'd to the stony Ground, that are said to believe for a while, that when Persecution for the Word ariseth, by and by they are offended (or scandaliz'd), Matt. xxiii. 24. i. e. Tempted hereby to fall from their Christian Profession by this dangerous *Stumbling-block* of Sufferings laid in their way. So the Pharisees are often said to be scandaliz'd at our Lord, Matt. xv. 12. Luke vii. 23. Matt. xiii. 57. when upon any particular Doctrine of his, they were tempted to reject and disown him as none of the true Messiah. So our Lord foretells, that many of his profess'd Disciples would, upon the grievous and violent Opposition his Gospel should meet with, be scandaliz'd, Matt. xxiv. 10. i. e. tempted to fall away from the Faith. And thus Peter, in his vain Self-confidence said, *Tho' all Men should be offended (or scandaliz'd) yet will not I*, Matt. xxvi. 33. i. e. tho' all should be tempted to disown or deny thee, yet would not I. And 'tis chiefly on the Account of such *Stumbling-blocks*, laid in Mens way to hinder them from embracing the Gospel, or to seduce or deter them from the Profession of it, that our Lord denounces such a *Woe to the World, because of Offences (or Scandals)*.

But yet the Word does in Scripture admit of a larger Sense, and extends to such Words, or Actions, or Omissions of ours; whereby we sinfully occasion others falling into particular Error or Sin, laying before them a dangerous Snare and Temptation thereto. Thus Balaam is said to lay a *Stumbling-block (or Scandal)* before the Israelites, when he advis'd Balak to lay such a Temptation before them, first to Uncleaness, and then to Idolatry, Rev. ii. 4. So our blessed Saviour accounts Peter's Advice to be a *Scandal or Stumbling-block*, when it would have diverted him from that particular Duty of laying down his Life for us, Matt. xvi. 23. And the Apostle Paul reckons those would be guilty of laying such a *Scandal or Stumbling-block* in their weak Brethren's Way, who should eat of Things sacrific'd to Idols, in such Circumstances as had a probable Tendency to induce others to do it, whose weak Consciences would either be thereby defil'd, or themselves tempted to entertain Prejudices against the Gospel, by the free Use that others made of their Christian Liberty. So our Lord speaks of our right Eye or right Hand offending or scandalizing us, when it occasions our falling into this or that particular Sin. As the covetous Eye does the Worldling, the lustful Eye the Unclean, &c. Matt. xxiii. 8.

Having thus far clear'd my Way, I come now to consider more closely the Text it self, and accordingly here are three Things observable in it.

I. Our blessed Lord foretels, *That such Offences or Scandals, such Occasions of Falling (whether into open Infidelity and Wickedness, or into particular Error and Sin) would certainly come in our Way.*

II. He here denounces a *Woe to the World, on the Account of such numerous Offences or Scandals that would abound in it.*

III. He denounces a particular *Woe to such by whom such Offence or Scandal comes; i. e. who culpably lay such Occasions of falling in the Way of others.*

Of these I shall speak in their Order. And,

I. Our blessed Lord foretels, *That such Offences or Scandals, or such Occasions of Falling, (whether into open Infidelity and Wickedness, or into particular Error and Sin) would certainly come in our Way.*

It must needs be that Offences come.

In speaking hereto, I shall,

First, Shew, by a brief Enumeration of a few particular Instances, how fully the Event has verifi'd this Prediction of our Lord. And then,

Secondly, Consider, *Whence this Certainty of such Offences coming does arise, and what our Lord intends, when he saith, It must needs be that Offences come.*

I begin with the

First, To shew by the brief Enumeration of a few particular Instances, how fully the Event has verifi'd this Prediction of our Lord, that Offences or Scandals would come.

And here we may distinctly consider, those Offences or Scandals which occasion Mens rejecting Christianity, or falling from it, and those which occasion their falling into any particular Errors or Sins.

I. We may consider those Offences or Scandals which occasion Mens rejecting Christianity, or falling from it.

And these Offences or Scandals arise either from those without, or those within the Pale of the visible Church.

Such Offences or Scandals have been laid in Mens Way by those that are without, by Infidels themselves.

Such a dangerous *Stumbling-block* was laid in Mens Way, by the early and violent Opposition that both unbelieving Jews and Gentiles made to the Gospel of Christ.

For not only were many Thousands deter'd from embracing the Gospel, when they saw with what Fury and Rage their Rulers prosecuted all the Professors of it; but many of its Professors themselves were hereby tempted to abandon their Profession, and to make Shipwreck of their Faith, thro' the Terror of such grievous Sufferings. And this is what our Lord foretold, and the Event herein answer'd his Prediction, *That they (i. e. The Infidel Rulers) should deliver up those that profess'd his Name, to be afflicted, and should kill them, and they should be hated of all Nations for his Name sake, and then should many be offended (or scandaliz'd), i. e. tempted hereby to a Defection from Christianity,* see Matt. xxiv. 9, 10.

Nay, not only the Malice, but even the Subtlety of Infidel Seducers, did often lay a dangerous *Stumbling-block* in the Way of others, to pervert them from the Christian Faith, when they made use of all the cunning Arts of such as lie in wait to deceive, or (as the Apostle speaks, 2 Thes. ii. 10.) of all Deceivableness of Unrighteousness, all crafty Methods of Seduction, to turn Men from the Faith of the Gospel.

But besides those, from such as are without, many such Occasions or Temptations to reject or fall from the Christian Faith, are laid in Mens Way, by such as are within the Pale of the visible Church.

And O what fatal *Stumbling-blocks* have been laid in the Way of Infidels, to hinder their Conversion to the Christian Faith, by such as have profess'd it; partly by their scandalous Contentions and Divisions, partly by those gross Errors and Delusions that they have corrupted the Christian Faith with; partly by those Idolatries and Superstitions that have crept in, to the defacing the Simplicity and Spirituality of Christian Worship; partly by the notorious Corruption of Manners, and the manifold gross and shameful Disorders and Immoralities, that have abounded in the Christian World, to the great Dishonour and Reproach of our common Profession. And 'tis such Corruptions as these, that have been a fatal *Stumbling-block* in the Way of Infidels, and fill'd

fill'd them with such wretched *Prejudices* against Christianity, as have hindred their embracing it. Nay, alas, how successfully have they tempted many to fall from the *Christian Faith* into *Infidelity*, (or in our modern Language, to *Deism*); nay, into *Atheism* it-self! And how many such *Scandals* or *Stumbling-blocks* does the *Romish Church*, at this Day, lay in the Way of *Jews* and *Mahometans*? Not to mention those laid in their Way, by the reformed Churches themselves, thro' their woful *Animosities*, and the Spirit of *Malignity* and *Persecution* that has appear'd among them, besides the great *Scandal* of their *Immoralities* too common with them, as well as with those of the *Romish Church*.

So true was our Lord's Predictions, that *Offences* (or *Scandals* and *Occasions of Falling*) would certainly come. But,

2. As to those *Offences* or *Scandals*, and *Stumbling-blocks*, which occasion Mens falling into particular *Error* or *Sin*, they are innumerable.

Such are all *erroneous Doctrines*, especially all those that give any *Encouragement* to *Sin*. Such are all the *Temptations* and *Snares*, which we either on Purpose set before others to inveigle them into *Sin*, or at least, which have a natural Tendency to involve them in the *Guilt* of it. Such *Stumbling-blocks* do we lay in Mens Way, when we either by the *Terror* of *Sufferings*, or by the *Lucre* of *Preferments*, put them under a strong *Temptation* to embrace any *Error*, or to join in any *Corruption* of *Worship*; or in any *sinful Practice* against the *Light* of their own *Consciences*. And such a *Temptation* and *Snares* do we (by every *sinful Practice* of our own that falls under the *Observation* of others) lay before them to imitate it; so that our *Fall* has a Tendency to involve them in the same *Guilt*, so far as the *Influence* of our *Example* can reach. Nay, we may so unseasonably use our *Christian Liberty* it self, as thereby to set such a *Stumbling-block* before others. As those *Gentile-Christians* did, who, by their eating *Things sacrific'd to Idols* (which was lawful in general when not done in the *Idols Temple*, where it was perform'd as an *Act of Devotion*) in the Presence of a weak *Judaizing Christian*, who thought it utterly unlawful, did tempt him either to eat thereof against the *Light* of his own *Conscience*, or else to entertain *Prejudices* against *Christianity* it self, because of this *Liberty* that the *Gentile-Christians* took: And on this Account, the Apostle advises their refraining the Use of their *Christian Liberty*, in such Circumstances in which it would probably prove such a *Stumbling-block* or *Occasion of Falling* to their weak *Brethren*.

But here, to descend to all the Particulars comprehended under those *General Heads*, were endless, and would lead me far beyond the *Bounds* of my present Subject.

I proceed therefore to consider,

Secondly, Whence the *Necessity* of these *Offences* (or *Scandals*) coming does arise. And what our Lord intends, when he saith, *It must needs be that such Offences or Scandals should come.* *Ἀνάγκη γὰρ ἔσται, &c.*

Ans. We must by no Means here suppose, that our Lord intends to represent it as simply impossible, that such *Offences* or *Scandals* should not come; or as if any Man were necessitated by any *Act* on God's Part, to set such a *Temptation* to fall before others. For the doing so, is a *voluntary sinful Act* of the Person that does it, and for which he is liable to God's just Displeasure; and accordingly here is a *Woe* denounced against him for it.

But there are these two Things here imply'd.

1. That the coming of such *Offences* is a Thing that, considering the general *Corruption* of human Nature, was unavoidable, without the *Interposal* of a miraculous Power to prevent it.

2. That God on the contrary, has thought fit, for wise and holy Reasons, to permit it.

1. The coming of such *Offences* is a Thing that, considering the general *Corruption* of human Nature, was unavoidable, without the *Interposal* of a miraculous Power to prevent it.

And therefore, what the Evangelist *Matthew* expresses thus, *It must needs be, &c.* the Evangelist *Luke* hath it thus, *ἀνάγκη ἔσται, &c.* 'Tis not otherwise to be expected, but that *Offences* (or *Scandals*) will come; for so the Words may be better rendred, than as we render them, 'Tis impossible, &c.

The *Doctrine* of the Gospel was so opposite to Mens *prejudicate Opinions*, which they had imbib'd by Education, so contrary to the *Forms of Religion* then entertain'd in the World, especially so opposite to Mens *corrupt Customs* and *sensual Lusts*, that our Lord might well suppose, that it would meet with violent *Opposition* and *Persecution* from the *Infidel World*: And consequently, that this great *Stumbling-block* or *Scandal* would be laid in the Way of Men, to deter them from embracing it, and adhering to it. Nay, when that *Doctrine* was generally propagated and entertain'd thro' a considerable Part of the World, it was easy to foresee, that since many Thousands would croud into the *Christian Church*, when it had the Countenance of *Christian Emperors* and *Magistrates*, drawn more by the *Lucre* of *Interest* and *Honour*, than by the *Love* of *Truth* or *Piety*, such would corrupt Christianity to model it suitably to their *carnal Interests* and *Designs*. The *Pride* and *Folly* of some would introduce new *Opinions*, and prompt them (if in any eminent Stations) to impose them on the Belief of others. The *carnal Temper* of others would lead them to despise the *Simplicity* of *Gospel-Worship*, and to accommodate it to the *Relish* of the *Infidel World*, by introducing something of *external Pomp* and *Pageantry* into it. The *Ambition* of others would revive that *Dispute* that begun among the *Disciples* themselves, when one would think their external Circumstances gave them the least *Temptation* to it; viz. *Who should be greatest?* And in the prosperous external State of the Church, it could not be expected, but that the *Strictness* of *practical Piety* should decline, and that *Licentiousness* and *Immorality* should revive, which *worldly Plenty* is so strong a *Temptation* to. And 'tis natural for those that are in *Love* with their *Sins* to adapt their *Opinions* to their *Practice*, and to bring in *loose Doctrines*, to patronize and countenance *loose Practices*. And such a grievous and general *Depravation* of the *Christian Religion*, naturally tends to prejudice those without against it, and to tempt those within to doubt the *Truth* of it, and to fall from it. Nay, from hence innumerable *Temptations* will arise to lead particular *Professors* to those particular *Errors* and *Sins*, which are recommended to them so often by the *Authority* or *Example* and *Influence* of their *Pastors*, &c.

Our Lord might therefore well represent it as necessary or morally impossible, and to the highest Degree improbable, that *Offences* (or *Scandals*) should not come; since without a *Miracle* to prevent it, this was the genuine Consequence of the general *Depravation* of human Nature, that would lead Men either to reject the Gospel, or if they feignedly embrac'd it, to corrupt it; and thereby accommodate it to their own *sinful Inclinations*, and *worldly Interests*. Nay,

2. Our Lord seems here to intend, that God, instead of interposing his miraculous Power, to prevent the coming of such *Offences* or *Scandals*, has thought fit, for wise and holy Ends, to permit them; viz.

For such as these;

Partly, To manifest the *Excellency* of the Gospel in its *Prevalency*, notwithstanding all the *Stumbling-blocks* and *Temptations* laid in Mens Way, to hinder them from embracing it, or adhering to it.

Partly, To make a more manifest *Distinction* between the sincere and hypocritical *Professors* of it.

For what is elsewhere said of one sort of *Offences* or *Scandals*, viz. *Heresies* or *Divisions*, may be apply'd to all, There must (saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 19) be *Heresies* among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. Our Faith appears to be sincere, nay strong, when it can enable us to reject the strongest *Temptations* to *Infidelity*; when no *Offences* or *Scandals*

Scandals cast in our Way, can shake our Stedfastness and Constancy in our Christian Profession, not grievous Persecutions and Sufferings themselves. Our Sincerity and Impartiality in our Enquiries after Truth, never appears more, than when it enables us to reject Errors, tho' recommended with the most specious and subtle Pretences, nay, tho' worldly Preferment and Dignity lye on the other side. Our uncorrupted Piety and Holiness never shines brighter than when it conquers the strongest Allurements to Sin, and enables us to swim against the Stream of Publick Example.

Partly, To illustrate the Power of Divine Grace, and the Care of God's indulgent Providence over his Church.

For 'tis a great Argument thereof, that notwithstanding such innumerable Offences and Scandals, the Interest of Christianity is yet so far upheld and maintain'd in the World; and that the Interest of Infidelity, Error and Wickedness, have not more universally prevail'd against it. 'Tis owing to the Skill of the Divine Pilot, that this Ship is preserv'd in the midst of so many Tempests and Storms, Rocks and Shelves.

And 'tis but congruous to his Wisdom to permit the coming of these Offences and Scandals, when he can and will thus over-rule them for his own Glory, and for such excellent Purposes of his wise and holy Providence.

I now proceed to the

IId. General Head, viz. The Woe which our Lord here denounces to the World, because of these Offences (or Scandals.)

Woe to the World because of Offences:

Now the plain Intent of this is to signify to us, that such Offences or Scandals wou'd be of very mischievous and pernicious Consequence in the World. That as such Scandals wou'd be given, or such Stumbling-blocks and Temptations lay'd in the way of others, so they wou'd be too generally taken, and prove the sad Occasions of their Stumbling and Fall. And the Truth of this is abundantly confirm'd by sad and woful Experience. How successfully does Persecution hinder the Progress of the Gospel in the Infidel World? Nay, how fatal an Engine has it been to obstruct the Progress of uncorrupted Christianity in all those Churches where Papal Tyranny is predominant! 'Tis a Bloody Inquisition that so effectually keeps the Light of the Gospel out of Italy and Spain, &c. And how many Thousands has barbarous Cruelty forc'd in France, and elsewhere, to abjure the Truths of the Reformed Religion! How many Thousands have been fatally prejudic'd against Christianity by beholding the shameful Contentions and Corruptions of the Christian Church! What a wretched Stumbling-block is Papal Idolatry to Mahometans and Jews! And who can express what the Honour and Interest of Religion has suffer'd by those Wounds she has received in the House of her Friends, I mean by the scandalous and odious Miscarriages of its Professors! How greedily are pleasing Errors and licentious Doctrines embrac'd! What a pernicious Influence have wicked Examples, especially of Persons in Authority and Office, and of such as are of any Eminency and Figure, on the corrupting and depraving of others! And O how spreading is the Contagion of Error or Sin! So that he who lays a Stumbling-block in the way of one single Person, and thereby occasions his Fall, knows not how far the poisonous Malignity of that one Offence or Scandal may diffuse it self. So that when we consider how innumerable Occasions of Falling are lay'd in our Way, 'tis a wonder of Divine Grace that any are preserv'd stedfast and constant in their Holy Profession; but no wonder that the far greater part do fall either into pernicious Error, or which is no less dangerous, into woful Irreligion and Wickedness. Well then might our Lord say, Woe to the World because of Offences (or Scandals,) when those are so numerous, and do every where so greatly abound; and when the Generality are so dispos'd thro' their Ignorance, thro' their corrupt Inclinations, or in compliance with their worldly Interest, to be

drawn away by them from the Interest of Truth and Holiness.

But,

III. We have here a Woe denounced by our Lord against him by whom the Offence or Scandal comes, i. e. against him that culpably lays this Stumbling-block, or occasion of Falling in the way of others.

For this is suppos'd to be a very heinous and aggravated Crime, both by this Woe denounc'd against him that commits it, and by the foregoing Words in which our Lord tells us, that if any Man thus scandalize the least of his Disciples, it had been better for him that a Mill-stone were ty'd about his Neck, and he thrown into the midst of the Sea.

Now I take this Woe to be chiefly denounc'd against those that endeavour to pervert Men from the Faith or Practice of the Gospel, and to draw them into Infidelity or Wickedness, whether it be by Terrors or Flattery, or by subtle Arts of Seduction, or by the Influence of their Perswasions and Example. And no wonder that our Saviour shou'd denounce such a Woe against those, that besides their own Guilt, are so necessary to the Sin and Ruin of others, by laying such occasions of Falling in their way. And I wou'd particularly have those consider this Threatning as levell'd against them, who by their own scandalous Miscarriages bring an evil Report on Religion, encourage others to the like Wickedness, or harden them in it. For such lay a dangerous Stumbling-block in the way of others, that many are in danger of falling by. And such as these have no other way to escape the Woe denounc'd in the Text, than by a deep Repentance for such shameful Offences, a serious Endeavour to prevent, as far as they can, the pernicious Influence of their Example, and by using the utmost care to retrieve the Honour of Religion, as far as possible, by their accurate and circumspect Behaviour, that so their Repentance may be as observable as their Fault has been.

And doubtless this Woe must be understood as only taking place, where this Guilt is impenitently persisted in, and not as excluding all such as have once incur'd it, from finding Mercy upon their unfeigned Repentance, and serious Endeavours to undo their past Sin herein, as far as they can. But without such Repentance the Guilt of such Men is greatly enhanc'd, by their contributing so much to the Seduction and Fall of others; and they will have others Errors and Sins as well as their own to answer for. Nay, their Guilt will be measur'd by the Tendency of their Actions, even tho' the pernicious Consequences of them shou'd be prevented. They will be charg'd with laying the Snare and Temptation, tho' none shou'd actually fall into it. They lay'd the Poison, tho' none drunk it down. And since the Guilt of such is so great on the account of those pernicious Effects it tended to produce, no wonder that our Blessed Lord does here denounce so solemn a Woe against them. Woe to him by whom the Offence comes, q. d. His Guilt is heinous indeed, he being accountable for all the pernicious Consequences of it.

It now remains that we apply this practical Subject.

Has our Lord foretold, that such Offences and Scandals will certainly come? Has he forewarn'd us of the mischievous and sad Effects they will produce in the World? And has he denounc'd such a solemn Woe against those by whom they come?

Then,

I. It concerns all of us to take care, that we be not scandaliz'd our selves, or, that those Offences that abound in the World do not occasion our Stumbling and Fall.

And,

II. It does as much concern us to take care, that we do not scandalize others, i. e. occasion their Fall, by laying any Stumbling-block or Temptation in their way.

I. It concerns all of us to take great Care, that we be not scandaliz'd our selves, i. e. That those Offences, those Scandals or Stumbling-blocks, that abound in the World, do not occasion our Fall.

And

And in speaking to this Branch of my Exhortation from this Passage,

I shall, *First*, Take Notice of some of the principal Scandals and Stumbling-blocks that do lye in our way, and suggest something to prevent your Falling by them.

Secondly, Urge this Caution and Care by such Arguments as the Text suggests.

First, I shall take Notice of some of the principal Scandals or Stumbling-blocks that lye in our way, and suggest something to prevent your Falling by them. As,

'Tis a great Stumbling-block or Scandal cast in our way, to behold the woful Divisions and Schisms that are in the Christian World, and with what Confidence the several contending Parties condemn each other. This is a strong Temptation either to doubt of the Truth of Christianity, or to suspend our Assent to it till those that so earnestly contend about it seem better agreed among themselves, or to Uncharitableness towards those that differ from us.

Again, 'Tis another great Stumbling-block or Scandal in our way, when we either behold the general Corruption of Manners in the Christian Church, or see the shameful Falls of such as have made a Specious and eminent Profession of Religion; that general Corruption that abounds in the Christian Church, tempts Men to disbelieve, and despise the Gospel it self, when it seems to produce no better Effects than Pagan Philosophy. And the shameful Falls of Eminent Professors, are a strong Temptation, either to take the same Liberty, and to imitate their Falls, or on the Account of them to look upon all Religion as a Cheat.

Again, 'tis another great Stumbling-block or Scandal in our way, when we see Religion prostituted to worldly Designs and Interests; this tempts us to censure all Religion as Priest-Craft.

Again, 'tis another great Stumbling-block, when we see Truth persecuted and oppress'd by those that are in Power. Nay, when in Matters that are disputed, Secular Honours and Preferments, are on that side, which we have great reason to think to be in the wrong. This is a strong Temptation to abandon the Truth, when 'tis like to expose us to Sufferings, and to make our Judgments bend and truckle to our worldly Interest.

Again, 'tis another great Stumbling-block and Scandal in our Way, when we see the blind and misguided Zeal of many Professors, and the woful Fruits thereof: This is a strong Temptation to wretched Luke-warmness and Neutrality in the Cause of God.

I shall begin with that which I mentioned as the Second.

I. 'Tis a great Scandal and Stumbling-block in our way, when we behold the general Corruption of Manners in the Christian World, especially when we see the shameful Falls of such as have once made an eminent and Specious Profession of Religion. This general Corruption lays before us a strong Temptation, to entertain mean Thoughts of Christianity, when it produces no better Fruits in the Generality of those that profess it; and the Falls of such eminent Professors, tempt us either to imitate them, or on the account of them to suspect all Religion as a Cheat.

I shall begin with the Latter, viz.

The shameful Falls of such as have once made a Specious and eminent Profession of Religion. These are a very common Stumbling-block and Scandal in our way. And accordingly, they prove a dangerous Temptation to some, to imitate their Example, and take the same Liberty they have done; others are tempted farther by them, to censure all Religion as a Cheat, and the Professors of it as Hypocrites.

First, To some the shameful Falls of such as have once made a Specious and eminent Profession of Religion prove a strong Temptation to imitate their Sins, and venture upon the same Liberty they have taken.

They are ready to say, if such an one that has so fair a Reputation for Piety, could be drunk, or unclean,

or in his Passion curse and swear, &c. Why may not I? Why should I be more scrupulous than he? Nay, if he hope to be sav'd notwithstanding, why may not I? Nay, to this wretched purpose many abuse the Examples of the Falls of good Men recorded in Scripture, as an Encouragement to venture upon their Guilt, in hopes of easily obtaining the same Forgiveness that they did.

Now that you may not stumble at this common Rock of Offence; that the Falls of such eminent Professors may not occasion yours, by emboldening you to imitate their heinous Miscarriages, I wou'd offer a few Considerations to prevent it.

As,

1. The Precepts of the Gospel, and not the Examples of its Professors, are to be your Rule.

All the Practices of good Men, that are recorded in the Holy Scriptures themselves, are by no means propos'd as Patterns for our Imitation. The Rule is strait, but their Lines were often very crooked. Nay, many of their Practices are censured as highly displeasing to God, and set before us as awful Instances of Human Instability, and Warnings of our extream Danger by strong Temptations. Much less must we make their Examples our Rule, who have had a specious Name for Piety in the Age wherein we live. We must be Followers of them, no farther than they are Followers of Christ, and must therefore make his unerring Law, not their mutable Practice, our Directory and Guide. If their Actions manifestly swerve from it, we have no more reason to follow them, than we wou'd a Guide that our own Eyes plainly tell us, wou'd lead us quite out of the Way, even into Bogs and Precipices. There are Hypocrites as well as real Saints, and all that make a fair shew of Religion do not live agreeably to it.

2. There is nothing in their shameful Falls, or in the Consequences of them, that shou'd encourage and embolden us to imitate them, but rather what shou'd fright and deter us from it.

If there be any thing in their scandalous Miscarriages that shou'd encourage us to imitate them, it must be either that we think their State safe, notwithstanding such scandalous Miscarriages, tho' they shou'd impenitently persist in them; or that we hope to repent as well as they, and upon our Repentance to obtain Forgiveness and Mercy.

For the Former, it wou'd argue great Ignorance of the whole Tenour of the Gospel, to suppose the State of such Professors safe under such scandalous Miscarriages, tho' impenitently persisted in.

We are peremptorily told concerning those Works of the Flesh mention'd, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. — That they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. Nay, for such Sins we are assur'd, the Wrath of God will come on all the Children of Disobedience — Col. iii. 5, 6. — Nor will Men's former plausible Profession exempt them from this threaten'd Vengeance, or prevail with God to dispense with their wilful Violation of his Law. We are expressly told, when the Righteous turns away from his Righteousness, and commits Iniquity, and doth according to all the Abominations that the wicked Man doth, shall he live? All the Righteousness that he has done shall not be mentioned, in his Trespass that he hath trespass'd, and in his Sin that he hath sinn'd, shall he dye, Ezek. xviii. 24. Nay, a wilful impenitent Continuance in any one known Sin, is a strong Objection against all our Pretensions to Piety, and a sure Evidence that what ever we pretend, we are the Servants of Corruption.

For the Latter, that we hope to repent as well as they, and upon our Repentance to obtain Forgiveness and Mercy.

That this gives us no reasonable Encouragement to imitate their Sins, will appear if we consider,

1. How many thousands of such Professors have never recovered from their Falls!

Alas the *Instances* of those that have from a specious Profession sunk into, and persever'd in a course of open Ungodliness, that have been entangled again in those *Pollutions of the World* which they had once escap'd, that have with the Dog return'd to his Vomit, &c. are very numerous and common. Whereas the *Examples* of such as have by deep Repentance recover'd their former Stability are exceeding rare. So that we may justly say at least *Vestigia pauca retrorsum*. And shall we venture upon those *Rocks and Shelves* where so many thousands have been shipwreck'd and perish'd; because some few have escap'd? Is it any Encouragement to venture upon Poyson because some few by the strength of Nature have overcome it?

2. Consider, What sad Effects such shameful Miscarriages have produc'd, even where they have been truly repented of, and forgiven.

The shameful *Falls* of good Men themselves have been attended with those woful Fruits that shou'd deter us from imitating their Follies.

What a deep Wound have they thereby given to the Interest of Divine Grace in their own Souls! How have their *Graces wither'd*! Their Holy Resolutions been enfeebled! Their Corruptions regain'd formidable Strength! The course of their Obedience how sadly has it been interrupted!

How much deeper a Wound have they given to their own Consciences! How have they lost all comfortable Sense of Divine Favour! Sunk themselves into disconsolate Darknefs, into woful Uncertainties and Doubts about their Eternal State; nay, sometimes into great Horrors and dismal Despair!

And alas, How deep a Wound have they hereby given to the general Interest of Religion! How have they opened the Mouths of a prophane Generation in blasphemous Reproaches against it! How have they harden'd licentious Sinners in their wretched Course! How have they griev'd and discourag'd the Generation of the Righteous? How much Mischief have they done to the Souls of others, which 'tis doubtful whether they will ever be able to repair!

And wou'd any Man thus wound himself in hopes that he may possibly be heal'd? When the Cure is like to be so painful, and when the ugly Scars it leaves may never be worn out? Shou'd any Man do so much Injury to Religion, to his own Soul, and to those of others, because 'tis possible he may repent and find Mercy? Wou'd any venture to kindle such destructive Flames, in hopes that he may, tho' with considerable Damage to himself and others, prevail at last to quench them.

S E R M O N XII.

Concerning OFFENCES or SCANDALS.

Matt. xviii. 7.

Woe to the World because of Offences (or Scandals;) For it must needs be that Offences come, but Woe to that Man by whom the Offence comes.



IN the Application of this Subject, I propos'd to insist on these two General Uses.

I. It highly concerns all of us to take care that we be not scandaliz'd our selves.

II. It does as much concern us to take care that we do not scandalize others.

I. It highly concerns us to take care that we be not scandaliz'd our selves, i. e. That the *Stumbling-blocks* and *Temptations* laid by others in our way, do not occasion our Fall.

In speaking to this Branch of the Exhortation, I propos'd,

I. To take Notice of the principal Scandals, or *Stumbling-blocks*, that are like to come in our way, and to suggest what may prevent our Falling by them.

II. To urge this Caution and Care by such Arguments, as the Text suggests.

I. I shall take Notice of the principal Scandals or *Stumbling-blocks*, that are like to be laid in our way, and shall suggest something to prevent your Falling by them. And here,

First, I begin with that common *Stumbling-block* laid in our way, the general Corruption of Manners in the Christian World, and especially the shameful Miscarriages of such as once made an eminent Profession of Religion.

As to the Latter, the shameful Miscarriages of such as once made an eminent Profession of Christianity, they may endanger our Fall two ways. Either,

I. By Emboldening us to imitate them in their Sins.

To prevent this, we shou'd consider,

1. 'Tis the Precepts of the Gospel, not the Examples of its Professors, that we must account our Rule and Guide.

2. There is nothing in their shameful Miscarriages and Falls that shou'd tempt us to venture on them, but rather what shou'd affright and deter us.

For we have no Reason to think their State safe under such Miscarriages, if impenitently persisted in, but the contrary.

Nor shou'd it encourage us to venture on their Guilt, that we may repent of it as well as they, and upon Repentance obtain Mercy and Forgiveness; for how many Thousands of such Back-sliding Professors have never recovered from their Falls, but drawn back to Perdition? And how sad and woful Effects have their Miscarriages and Falls produc'd, even tho' repented of and forgiven?

Thus far I have already gone, and shall now proceed to consider,

II. The other way, whereby the Miscarriages and Faults of Eminent Professors may endanger our Falling, viz. By tempting us to censure all Religion as a Cheat, and all the Professors of it as Hypocrites, because some appear such that once made a very specious Profession.

And alas, How many do thus stumble and fall on this common Rock of Offence! How many are tempted to entertain wretched Prejudices against serious Christianity, on the account of the scandalous Practices of such

such as once made a plausible Shew and Appearance of it? How many are induc'd hereby to blaspheme the Name of Christ, and to speak Evil of his Holy Truths and Ways? How many from the inexcusable Faults of a few, are drawn to dislike, to reproach and condemn the whole Generation of the Children of God?

Now that this Temptation may never prevail upon any of us, that this Scandal or Stumbling-block, may never occasion our Fall, I wou'd suggest the following Considerations.

1. 'Tis highly unreasonable and unjust to reproach Christianity with those Immoralities of its Professors, which is clearly disallows and condemns.

This is as unreasonable, as if a Man shou'd censure the Laws of the Land for the Crimes of Malefactors which it forbids. 'Tis true indeed where any Religion does countenance and encourage immoral Practices, we there most justly lay them to its Charge. Thus we justly reproach the Romish Religion with all those Cruelties of their Bloody Inquisitions, and other Publick Persecutions, which are not only openly practis'd and avow'd, but are consonant to the Decisions of their Councils, concerning the Obligation of Princes, to exterminate those they call Hereticks, out of their Dominions. So their Doctrine of meer Attrition, disposing a Man for Absolution, is justly censur'd as opening a Door to all Licentiousness. But for the Christian Religion it self, we may challenge its bitterest Enemies to mention any one immoral Action that it gives the least Countenance to. 'Tis therefore most unjust to entertain any Prejudices against it, on the account of the Miscarriages of those that pretend to embrace it. 'Tis not the fault of the Original, that the Copy is blurr'd; nor of the Rule, that the Lines that deviate from it, are crooked. Were the Lives of Christians conformable, either to the Tendency of that Holy Doctrine they profess to believe, or of those Holy Laws they pretend a Subjection to, or were they suitable to his spotless Example whose Followers they wou'd be accounted, Christianity wou'd shine with a Glory and Lustre capable to silence, and confound its most malignant Enemies, and to convince all the World of its Excellency and Divine Original. Those Spots then that sometimes stain the Lives of the most Eminent Professors of it, are indeed a clear Proof of either their Weakness and Instability, or their Hypocrisy and Dissimulation; but they are by no means any just Objection against the Gospel it self, whose Sacred Rules they counteract.

And farther,

2. 'Tis no less unjust to censure all that profess Christianity as Hypocrites, because some are so.

In all these Cases, 'tis fit that the Guilty Persons shou'd bear their own blame; but unreasonable that the Innocent shou'd suffer on their account. Men are sensible of the Injustice of this way of Arguing, in reference to any other Profession. There are many ignorant Quacks and Mountebanks; but it will not thence follow, that there are no judicious and conscientious Practisers of Physick. There are many that abuse the Law, to the perverting of Justice, and prolonging of vexatious Suits; but it will not thence follow, that either all Lawyers, or all Judges, are corrupt and dishonest. Many Traders are very fraudulent Dealers, and vers'd in all the Arts of Over-reaching and Deceiving those they deal with; but will any Man thence argue, that none of them are strictly honest and true. And if every Man be sensible of the Unreasonableness of such Inferences, in reference to other Professions, why shou'd the Inference be thought reasonable in reference to those that make Christianity their Profession. 'Tis no more wonder that some Hypocrites shou'd be found in the Communion of the Christian Church, than that there shou'd be some blasted Ears mixt with good Corn, and some rotten Fruit grow on the same Tree, with what is sound and good; nay, that the same Tree shou'd have dead and corrupt, as well as living and fruitful Branches. Are there some that dishonour their Christian Profession by scandalous Disorders and Im-

moralties, so are there others that not only are free from any such Falls, but persevere in exemplary Piety and Holiness to the End, and that in opposition to all the manifold Temptations they are surrounded with from the Flatteries or Frowns of the World. And we must chiefly judge of Christianity by those in whom the genuine and durable Fruits of it most conspicuously appear.

3. The great Use that we shou'd make of the scandalous Miscarriages of eminent Professors, is, to make us more sensible of the Instability of our own Purposes; more jealous over our own deceitful Hearts, and watchful against the manifold Temptations we are encompass'd with; Rom. xi. 20. 1 Cor. x. 12. More humble and diffident of our selves, more earnest in imploring the Assistances of Divine Grace, and depending thereon, Phil. ii. 13. and more compassionate towards those that fall, being ready to restore them with a Spirit of Meekness, knowing that we also may be tempted, Gal. vi. 1. These are very proper and very instructive Inferences, which we shou'd draw from such Examples of Human Inconstancy; and then such Stumbling-blocks in our way will be so far from proving Occasions of our Fall, that they will rather prove effectual Warnings to prevent it. They will be so far from filling us with Prejudices against Religion, and tempting us to forsake the Profession of it, that they will only prompt us to look better to the Sincerity of our own Hearts, and to work out our own Salvation, with more cautious Fear and Trembling, Phil. ii. 12. And accordingly, this is the true Use the Scriptures instruct us to make of them. (See the Places forecited.)

But I must not here altogether omit that Stumbling-block that may be laid in our way from the general Corruption of the Christian World, the View of which has, I doubt not, tempted many to injurious Thoughts of the Gospel it self, because they see so little valuable Fruits it produces among the Generality of those that pretend to believe it. From hence many are induc'd to doubt of its Divine Original, and to prefer what they call Natural Religion or Deism before it.

To prevent our Falling on this Stumbling-block in our way, I wou'd suggest a few Considerations.

As,

1. I have already shewn, that 'tis most unjust to charge Christianity it self, with those Faults of its Professors which it manifestly reproves and condemns.

It ought not therefore to bear the blame of any that live not up to its Holy Principles and Rules.

And this leads me to add,

2. That the general Corruption of the Christian World is owing to such Causes as do rather vindicate Christianity from the Blame of it.

This general Corruption is most observable in the Romish Church, and among those of that Communion. Now among them, 'tis chiefly owing to the woful Ignorance of true Christianity which the Proselytes of that Church are brought up in, by having the Holy Scriptures generally lock'd up in an unknown Tongue. And 'tis no wonder the Gospel of Christ shou'd be ineffectual to reform the Lives of those that never read it, and understand no more of it than the Priest thinks fit to teach them. Nay, their Priests themselves do generally deliver such loose and corrupt Doctrines to them, as tend to encourage Licentiousness, and to evacuate the Rules of the Gospel. 'Tis apparent, how destructive their Casuistical Divinity is of Practical Christianity. 'Tis manifest upon what slight Terms their Priests dispense their Absolutions; their Worship in an unknown Tongue tends to stifle all Spiritual inward Devotion, and consequently to obstruct the Influence it shou'd have upon their Practice. So that the general Corruption among them, next to the common Depravation of Human Nature, is to be ascrib'd to the pernicious Influence of Popery, so far as it stands in Opposition to true Christianity.

Nay, in the Protestant Churches themselves, the Corruption of Manners that is too visible among them is ve-

ry much owing to that Ignorance of the Gospel, which so greatly abounds thro' the Negligence of Parents and Pastors to instruct those under their Inspection and Care. And 'tis generally those Places where Ignorance prevails most, that are most remarkably overspread with *Prophaneness* and *Immorality*. As on the contrary, where the Knowledge of the Gospel is most diffus'd, there the Reformation of Men's Lives makes proportionable Advances. So that this deplorable Licentiousness of the Age is so far from being justly chargeable on Christianity, that 'tis chiefly owing to the little Care taken to instruct the People in the Holy Principles and Rules of it.

But, 3. Christianity may in this respect justly compare with, and does far outvie any other Religion in the World.

It did upon the first Propagation of it, make a very discernible and marvellous Reformation in the Pagan World. It banish'd that *Polytheism*, and that stupid *Idolatry* that had so universally overspread it. It discard'd those infamous *Magical Arts* that were so generally practis'd, and were had in so great Reputation. It freed *Divine Worship* from the horrible Corruptions of it, from the scandalous Cruelty of *Human Sacrifices*, from the odious and abominable Rites used in the Feasts of several of their Gods, in which the height of *Lewdness* and *Intemperance* were practis'd under the pretence of Religion. It did in a great measure restrain those unlawful *Marriages* that were then common in a great part of the Gentile World, and gave a remarkable check to those irregular Lusts that so abounded among them before. What the Apostle speaks in reference to his Converts at *Corinth*, does give us a true and faithful Account of the happy Change the Gospel made in the *Gentile-World*, when speaking of *Idolaters*, *Fornicators*, *Adulterers*, *Effeminate*, *Abusers of themselves with Man-kind*, *Thieves*, *Covetous*, *Drunkards*, *Revilers*, *Extortioners*, he adds, *such were some of you, but ye are wash'd, ye are sanctify'd*, &c. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 11.

Nay, we need not be ashamed of comparing the Christian with any part of the *Mahometan* or *Pagan* World.

But the Comparison will be made with much greater Advantage, if we take our measures of Christianity from the Lives of its sincere Professors, and compare them with those of the most celebrated *Votaries* of *Vertue* among the *Pagans*. Never did *Love to God* (that comprehensive Summary of true *Piety*) or *Love to Men*, even to all Men, to *Enemies themselves*, (that Compendium of all *Second-Table-Duty*) appear in so amiable Instances and Effects, as in the Lives of true Christians. And how far do the Examples of *Humility*, *Mortification to the World*, and of an *Heavenly Spirit* and *Life* in them, transcend all that occurs in the best of *Pagan Moralists*; and no wonder, when the Rules of the blessed Gospel so far surpass the best of *Heathen Morality*. So that tho' we have great reason to lament and be ashamed of the too general Corruption of the Christian World, yet we must own that what there appears of true *Piety* and *Holiness* in the World is most conspicuous there; and the Christian Church (notwithstanding all its Blemishes and Defects) is the most beautiful Model of *Heaven* here on this *Earth*. True Christians are indeed the *Salt of the Earth*, and shine as *Lights in this dark World*.

I now proceed to a

Second *Stumbling-block* cast in our way, viz. The woful Divisions and Schisms that are in the Christian World; and the Confidence wherewith the several Parties condemn each other.

Now this is a strong Temptation to some, to doubt of the Truth of Christianity, or to suspend their Assent to it, till those that so earnestly contend about it seem better agreed among themselves.

Others are hereby tempted to *Uncharitableness* towards all that differ from them. Now,

I. That the woful Divisions and Schisms that are in the Christian World, and the Confidence wherewith the

divided Parties condemn one another, may not tempt us to doubt the Truth of Christianity it self, I shall offer the following Considerations to prevent our Stumbling at this Rock of Offence.

As, 1. The Differences and Divisions that are found among Christians are, not for the most part about the Essentials of Christianity, but about Human Additions to it.

All Christians are agreed in owning those Books we call the *Old and New Testament* to be *Divinely inspir'd*. Only those of the *Romish Church* (contrary to the general and current Tradition of the Christian Church for 12 or 13 Centuries) ascribe the like Inspiration to the Books call'd *Apocryphal*.

All Christians are agreed in owning the *Creed* commonly call'd the *Apostles*. Nay, almost all, in owning the *Nicene Creed* as the comprehensive Summary of the Christian Faith. And our principal Difference with the *Romish Church* lies about the *New Articles* they have added to the *Ancient Symbols* of the Christian Faith, unknown to the Holy Scriptures, and never put into any Christian Creed for several Ages.

And for the Reformed Churches, their several Confessions of Faith express a very happy Agreement, not only as to the essential Articles, but even all the important Doctrines of the Christian Religion.

So that the Differences of Christians are rather about the corrupt Additions that some have made to Christianity, than about Christianity it self, in the Essential Articles whereof there is a general Accord.

And 'tis in those *Ancient Summaries* that the Christian Faith has been handed down thro' all Ages, free from those corrupt and pernicious Mixtures that the *Romish Church* has gradually attempted to adulterate it with. And he that considers them will easily distinguish between what was the ancient Faith of the Christian Church, and what *unscriptural Innovations* the *Romish Church* in these latter Ages has made therein.

As to our *Desires*, or the *Petenda* of Religion, all do agree the *Lord's-Prayer* to be a Comprehensive Summary of them.

As to *Divine Worship*, all do agree in making the *Blessed God* to be the *Supreme Object* of it, and in asserting our *Lord Jesus* to be our *Mediator with the Father*. And this the Scriptures do most clearly assert. Our great Difference about this Point is, whether *Angels* and *Saints* may be pray'd unto, and whether we may apply our selves to them as *Mediators of Intercession*? And sure shou'd be no great Difficulty to discern that this is a corrupt Addition to the Christian Religion, as well as the *Worship of Images* is a palpable Contradiction to it.

Nay, all Christians are generally agreed as to the Principal Parts of Christian Worship, as *Prayer*, *Praise*, *Preaching and Hearing the Word of God*, and the Two Sacraments of *Baptism* and the *Lord's-Supper*.

The great Differences concerning *Divine Worship* do chiefly lye about human corrupt Additions to it.

Thus we justly complain of it as a most unscriptural as well as irrational Practice to celebrate *Publick Worship* in an unknown Tongue. For *Baptism* 'tis evident, that those numerous Rites the *Romish Church* has defac'd it with, are all meer Additions to our Saviour's Institution, who requires no more, than our *Washing the Baptized Person in the Name of the Father*, &c.

As to the *Lord's-Supper*, all do agree, that 'tis design'd for the Commemoration of our Saviour's Sufferings and Sacrifice, and Communion in the Vertue and Fruits thereof. And all the *Popish Doctrines* of *Transubstantiation*, *Oral Manducation*, *Mass-Sacrifice*, *Adoration of the Host*, *Communion in one kind*, *Solitary Masses*, &c. with all the *Ludicrous* and *Pompous Rites* 'tis celebrated with, are either meer Corrupt Additions, or plain Contradictions to the Simplicity of our Saviour's Institution.

And for the other five *Popish Sacraments*, some of them are most improperly call'd *Sacraments* (as *Orders* and *Marriage*) others are unknown to the Holy Scriptures.

So that there needs no more than Sincerity and Diligence in comparing the *Doctrine and Practice* of the several contending Parties with the Holy Scriptures, in order to our distinguishing the Christian Religion it self from Men's corrupt Additions to it. All are agreed in the main of Christianity it self; 'tis Men's violent Zeal for human and corrupt Additions that has occasioned most of those Divisions that have weakened and torn the Christian Church.

2. Men do not allow this *Objection* against Christianity to be of any force in parallel Cases.

Thus 'tis no *Objection* against Philosophy it self, that there are such Differences of Opinions among those that pretend to it; nor is it any *Objection* against the Authority of Human Laws, that they are liable to be misinterpreted and perverted contrary to the real Intention and Design of the Law-givers. No more shou'd it be thought any solid Argument against the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures, and of the Christian Religion revealed in them, that there are some who wrest them to their own Destruction, by endeavouring to accommodate the Doctrines delivered there to their own worldly Interests or Lusts, or by obtruding and imposing their own corrupt Additions as a part of that Divine Revelation.

3. All the Use therefore that we shou'd make of those Differences and Divisions is, to compare the Doctrines and Practices of the several divided Parties of Christians with the Holy Scriptures, with the greater Diligence and Care; and to adhere to the Simplicity of the Christian Religion revealed there, rejecting the corrupt Additions that others have made to it. And he that sincerely believes and practises what the Scriptures do clearly reveal, and what an impartial Search into them will enable every serious Christian (by Divine Assistance) to discover, as that Unity of the Spirit that constitutes him a living Member of Christ's Mystical Body, and cannot be cut off from it by the uncharitable Censures that others may pass on him as an Heretick or Schismatick, because he refuses those sinful Additions to Christianity which they impose as necessary Terms of Communion. But that leads me to add,

That we must also take care that those Differences and Divisions among Christian Churches do not prove a *Stumbling-block* to us, by tempting us to uncharitable Censures of those that differ from us.

To prevent that, we must consider,

1. Every true Christian has by the Exercise of his Charity, mental Communion with all other Christians by whom the Essentials of Christianity are retain'd, without any such Additions as are destructive thereof. And this is the Communion of Saints mentioned in the Apostles Creed.

There is an Unity in one Mystical Body or Society, who are animated by one Holy Spirit, call'd in one Hope of their Heavenly Calling, subjected to one Lord, entertaining one Faith, (in respect of the necessary Articles of it, of which the Ancient Creeds give us a Summary) dedicated to God by one Baptism, and related to the One God and Father of all, who is above all, and thro' all, and in them all. And whoever partake of this Unity, we have vital Communion with them in all our sincere Acts of Devotion. We offer up all our Prayers and Praises as Members of the same Holy Society, Children of the same Family, Citizens of the same Spiritual Community, as a part of the same holy Priest-hood, and Living-stones of the same Spiritual Temple, concurring with them in the same holy Desires and Thanksgivings offer'd up with the same Spirit of Faith and Love. So that our Mental Communion is thus extensive to the whole Invisible Catholick Church, when our Local is confin'd to a single Congregation.

2. We ought to extend this Charity to many Churches with whom we cannot lawfully practise External Communion.

And the Reason of this is plain, because the Essen-

tials of Christianity may be retain'd by many Churches who yet not only deprave them with corrupt Additions, but impose those corrupt Additions as Terms of Christian Communion. Our Catholick Charity must not therefore be always as confin'd and narrow, as the sinful Impositions of others often make it necessary that our external Communion shou'd be. Thus the Eastern Churches have corrupted the Christian Religion with a great Multiplicity of sinful and superstitious Additions: But so far as those are not destructive of the Essentials of Christianity which they retain, so far we ought to form a charitable Judgment concerning them, and have no Reason to exclude them from the Catholick Church, tho' they are but a corrupt part of it. The Degeneracy of the Romish Church is far greater, and their pernicious corrupt Additions to the Christian Religion in Doctrine, Worship, and Practice, render their Relation to the visible Catholick Church more dubious, being like so much Poyson mixt with the Milk of God's Holy Word. And yet we may without any Prejudice to our Cause, so far extend our Charity as to entertain some hope, that in some of them, the Essentials of Christianity may in Heart and Life prevail against the dangerous Influence of the poisonous Additions of Popery.

But as to the reformed Churches, there is far more clear and solid Ground for our Charity. Their Confessions of Faith (as I observed before) manifest their Agreement in all the essential Articles of Christian Faith and Practice too. And the Differences that remain among them chiefly relate either to the Manner of administering those Ordinances of Christ which all of them own, or to the Exercise of Church Government and Discipline, or some Opinions in reference to which true Christians ought to exercise a mutual Forbearance and Charity. And nothing can be more absurd and foolish, than the Artifice of the Romish Missionaries, who, to cry up their pretended Unity would represent the Differences between Lutherans and Calvinists, Prelatists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists, Papobaptists and Antipapobaptists, Remonstrants and Contra-Remonstrants, as so many different Religions, and would persuade the World, that we are as uncharitable in condemning one another, as they are in branding us all for Hereticks, and excluding us out of the Catholick Church.

'Tis indeed true, that these remaining Differences are of some Importance and Weight, and 'tis our Duty to use the best Information we can have from the holy Scriptures to discern what is in those controverted Matters most conformable to that sacred Rule; and 'tis no less our Duty to fix our stated external Communion with those Churches in which the Christian Religion is restor'd to the greatest Simplicity and Purity.

But 'tis no less our Duty to extend our Christian Charity to all that hold the Head, and adhere to the same common Foundation, even tho' they may build some Hay and Stubble upon it. Our Christian Love is due to all that embrace the same Essentials of our holy Religion, and that appear to bear the same Image of our blessed Lord, and to love him in Sincerity, tho' their Opinions and Practices may in some lesser things differ from ours. And 'tis to those that would confine the Church to the narrow Bounds of their own Communion, and exclude all from their Charity that cannot come up to the same Uniformity with them in unnecessary Opinions and Rites, or unscriptural Practices, that the Charge of Schism chiefly belongs, which they would so industriously fix on all that differ from them, tho' they do it with a peaceable Spirit, and without any uncharitable Censures. 'Tis a Rule often mentioned, and most justly celebrated, but too little practis'd, that we should aim at Unity in things necessary, Liberty in things indifferent, and Charity in both; or, in the Apostle's Language, we should be studious to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, (even that of Catholick Love.)

SERMON XIII.

Concerning OFFENCES or SCANDALS.

Matt. xviii. Ver. 7.

Woe to the World because of Offences (or Scandals;) For it must needs be that Offences come, but Woe to that Man by whom the Offence comes.

UNDER the first Use, viz. *That we should take care that we be not scandaliz'd our selves;*

I propos'd,

First, *To take Notice of the principal Scandals or Stumbling-blocks that lie in our way, and to suggest what may prevent our falling by them.*

And here,

I. I consider'd that *Scandal* which arises from the shameful Miscarriages of such as once made a plausible Profession of Religion.

II. I consider'd that *Scandal* which arises from the woful Divisions and Schisms in the Christian World.

I now proceed to consider,

III. Another common Offence or Stumbling-block in our way, and that is from the woful Prostitution of Religion by many of its Professors, to serve their worldly Interests and Designs, especially its being made an Engine by those call'd the Clergy, to advance their own Grandeur and Domination, their Luxury and Wealth. 'Tis this has prov'd so fatal a Temptation to many, to run down all Religion under the invidious Name of Priest-Craft. And this is now grown so common and popular an Objection against Christianity in the Mouths of the infidel and irreligious part of the Age, that it requires our particular Care to answer it, and thereby to prevent your falling on this Rock of Offence.

In order to the removing this Stumbling-block, I would offer these things to your serious Consideration, viz.

1. It must be own'd, and should be lamented, that the Name and Pretence of the Christian Religion has been grossly abus'd, especially by those call'd the Clergy, to such mean and wretched Purposes as these.

Of this Prostitution of Religion to secular Designs, we have a notorious Instance in the Romish Church; the most of those Doctrines and Practices with which they have adulterated and corrupted the Christian Religion, being wholly calculated for advancing the Wealth and Grandeur of the Roman Pope and Clergy. And indeed that truly divine and admirable Institution was never more debas'd to such vile and low Purposes by any that ever wore the Christian Name.

What's the great Aim of their Doctrine of the Supremacy of St. Peter, and of the Pope's being his Successor therein, and of the Church of Rome's being the Mother and Mistress of all other Churches, but to aggrandize and enrich the Roman Bishop? For 'tis this arrogant Pretension that rais'd the Roman Popes to such an Height of Power and Domination, as once made Princes tamely submit their Crowns to their Disposal, and to hold them at their Pleasure. And 'tis the same Pretension that to this Day draws such a vast Number of expensive Causes

to the Court of Rome, and thereby drains a great part of the Wealth of all Popish Countries into the Papal Coffers. What serves the Invocation of Saints, and the Worship of Images and Relicks for, but to draw gainful Presents and Offerings from the blind Superstition of a deluded People, to the enriching of their Priests? Of what use is the Doctrine of Purgatory, but to raise the Price, and help forward the Sale of the Priest's Masses, and Pope's Indulgences, which have been such an inexhaustible Spring of Wealth to the one and to the other? Of what use is auricular Confession but to enslave the Consciences of the Laity to their Confessors, and to keep them in a more blind Obedience to those on whom they are taught to depend for the Absolution and Pardon of all their Sins? What serves Transubstantiation for, but to conciliate a greater Veneration to the Priests on the Account of this miraculous Power of turning a Wafer into a God, and to enhance the pretended Reverence of that Sacrament? Nay, why are the Laity debarr'd from the Cup, but to exalt the Priesthood above them, by so considerable a Privilege and Distinction in so solemn a Part of Divine Worship? Why are the Priests exempted from the secular Power, why are they forbidden Marriage, but to keep them more independent on the State, more entirely subject to the Pope, and to keep the Churches Treasure in the same Channel? What are all their numerous Swarms of Monks and Friars, in every Popish Country, but so many sure Vassals and Clients of the Roman Bishop; so many Janizaries listed in his Service, and oblig'd, by their entire Dependence on him, to support his Authority and Cause? What serve all their innumerable Rites and Ceremonies for, and all the Pomp and Pageantry of their Worship, but to amuse the ignorant Laity, to heighten their Veneration for the Priests, that make up in all their Processions and Festivals, the most splendid part of the religious Show? It were easy thus to run thro' all the main Articles of Popery, and to shew, how evidently these corrupt Additions to the Christian Religion are contriv'd to advance the Dominion and Wealth of the Romish Clergy; and how justly Popery, as distinct from Christianity, deserves the Name of Priest-Craft. And, *Woe be to those by whom this great Scandal comes.*

Nor can we excuse those from some part of this Blame, who not only put down true scriptural Bishops (depriving them of one essential part of their pastoral Office) and, in order to aggrandize themselves, assume the sole Exercise of Discipline over some Scores or Hundreds of Churches, (by which true Discipline becomes really impracticable) but who in their Courts prostitute the most solemn ecclesiastical Censures to secular Gain, and turn Christ's House of Discipline into an House of Merchandize. Nor can we altogether excuse those, that

turn that *Holy Eucharist*, which is the common Symbol of Christian Communion into an *Engine* for advancing a *State-faction*, and endeavour to confine the common *Table of our Lord*, by their arbitrary *Inclosures*, to a *Party*. 'Tis too evident, that *Religion* is hereby too far debased to serve mean and unworthy Purposes.

But then I must add,

2. If *Christianity* be consider'd in its own native *Simplicity* and *Purity*, as laid down in the holy Scriptures, nothing can be more *unreasonable* and *senseless*, than to run it down under the invidious *Notion of Priest-Craft*.

Christianity is so far from being calculated to serve any base worldly *Interest*, that never did any Institution carry such bright Characters of a divine Original in its heavenly *Designs* and *Aims*. Its *Laws* are apparently *Divine* and *Heavenly*, requiring from all its Professors a *Crucifixion to the World*, by virtue of the *Cross of Christ*, and a Readiness to renounce its dearest *Interests*, whenever they stand in competition with the Honour and superior *Interest* of our blessed Saviour. Our Blessed Lord has openly declar'd, That his *Kingdom is not of this World*. Its *Promises* and *Rewards* are as *spiritual* and *heavenly* as its *Laws*. It gives us the Prospect of no other *Riches* than those that are laid up in the other World; of no other *Dignities* and *Honours* than those of the heavenly *Kingdom*; of no other *Crowns* than an incorruptible immortal One, even the *Crown of Righteousness*. Nay, so far was our blessed Lord from encouraging *Christian Pastors* to aspire to *Dominion* and *Wealth*, that he most strictly caution'd them against that scandalous *Contention*, Which among them should be greatest, *Matt. xviii. 1, 2, 3, &c.* He represents their sacred *Function* it self, as a *Ministry* and *Service* (conformable to his own, who came to minister to others, not to be ministered unto:). Nay, in that *Function* he allows those only to be the greatest, who are the most eminent for *Humility* and *Condescension*; see *Matt. xx. 25, 26, &c. Luke xxii. 25, &c.* 'Tis indeed true, that our blessed Lord has ordain'd, That they who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel, *1 Cor. ix. 14.* And, That he who is taught in the Word, should communicate to him that teaches in all good things, *Gal. vi. 6.* But he has by no means empower'd such *Pastors* to add any new *Doctrines* to those of the Gospel for advancing their own *Gain*, or to enact any new *Laws* for aggrandizing and enriching themselves, or to prostitute his sacred *Discipline* to filthy *Lucre*. If any use such scandalous *Artifices* as these, the Gospel does no way countenance and abett them, but disowns their shameful Practice in thus corrupting (or huckstering) the Word of God, *2 Cor. ii. 17.* and making *Merchandize* of the Souls of Men, *2 Pet. ii. 3.* The Gospel gives no Encouragement to *Ambition* and *Avarice* in the *Dispensers* of it, but rather lays them under the strongest Obligation to be Patterns to others in all *Lowliness* and *Humility*, in *Mortification to this World*, and in an heavenly Spirit and Conversation: So that this Reproach cast upon *Christianity*, wholly arises from Mens wretched Ignorance, or gross *Misrepresentation* of it, from their not distinguishing between our holy Profession, and the Practice of such as corrupt and debase it.

IV. Another common Scandal or *Stumbling-block* often laid in the way, arises from the *Sufferings* that attend either our *Christian Profession* in general, or our *Adherence* to the uncorrupted *Purity* of it, in opposition to such as corrupt it, and rigorously impose those *Corruptions*.

This was a very common and pernicious *Stumbling-block* laid in the way of all that embrac'd the Gospel upon the first Propagation of it, when it met with the violent Opposition of *Jews* and *Gentiles*. And the like Treatment have those by whom *Christianity* was restor'd to its primitive *Simplicity* often met with from the *Romish Church* (that had reviv'd much of the *Pagan Idolatry*, under the *Christian Name* and *Profession*) And we have in the late Persecution of *France*, a sad Instance of many *Thousands*, whom the *Terror* of it prevail'd upon to abjure their Religion, and to make

Shipwreck of the Faith. And this is what our Lord has forewarn'd us of, That when *Tribulation* arises, many should be offended, (or scandaliz'd) *Matt. xxiv. 10.* Thus we read of the *Hearers* compar'd to the *stony Ground*, that when *Persecution* arises, because of the Word, by and by they are offended, *Matt. xiii. 21.* See also *John xvi. 1, 2, &c.* Nay, such a *Stumbling-block* is laid in our way, whenever we are tempted by the *Lure* of worldly *Interest*, or *Preferment*, to any sinful *Compliances* against the *Light* of a well-informed Judgment. Now, to prevent our falling on this *Rock of Offence*, we should consider,

I. 'Tis congruous to the *Wisdom* of God sometimes to try our *Fidelity* to him, by exposing us to such *Sufferings* in his Cause.

And accordingly they are a most proper *Test* to discover how far we prefer the *Glory* of God before our worldly *Interest* and *Ease*; how far our ardent *Love* to him prevails against our carnal *Self-love*; how far our *Faith* in him and in his precious *Promises* can conquer all our sinful *Fears*; our *Carriage* under such *Persecution* for *Truth* and *Righteousness* sake will make it evident, upon what *Motives* we have embrac'd the *Christian Profession*, and how far 'tis indeed rooted in our Hearts. We should therefore consider, that 'tis a shrewd Argument of our *Hypocrisy* and *Insincerity*, when *Dangers* deter us from our *Duty*; when the *Love* of this World tempts us to turn our Backs upon our blessed Lord; when, with the young Man, we go away sorrowful, being (tho' loath to depart from Christ, yet more) loath to quit our great Possessions; when in any competition between our *Duty* and our *Interest*, we can make our *Consciences* truckle to our Advantage and *Gain*. Whereas 'tis a comfortable Argument, that our *Faith* is of the right Stamp, when it can bear the fiery Trial; that the *Interest* and Cause of God is most dear to us, when we can sacrifice our *Lives*, or the most valuable *Comforts* of them thereto; that his *Love* reigns in our Hearts, when we can freely forsake all for him; that our blessed Saviour has the predominant *Interest* there, when whatever *Scorn* or *Reproach*, whatever *Indignities* and *Sufferings* may attend our faithful *Adherence* to him, Yet we are not offended in him, (i. e. not tempted hereby to the least Step of shameful *Defection* from him, or from his holy *Truths* and *Ways*.) And it would greatly fortify us against this Temptation, thus to consider (when *Sufferings* in the way of *Duty* are in our Prospect) God is now about to try the *Sincerity* of our Profession.

2. Let's consider, what are like to be the final Issues, accordingly as we do, in case of *Persecution*, prove constant or inconstant in the Cause of Christ.

And this Consideration will easily shew us how little Force there is in the Temptation, and how unreasonable our sinful Compliance would be.

Do *Sufferings* appear on the one hand in all their formidable Terror, to affright us into a *Defection* from *Truth* or *Duty*? Let us view on the other hand, that endless *Felicity* that shall be the certain Reward of our persevering *Fidelity*. And how far will these Afflictions that are but light and momentary be counterbalanced by an exceeding and eternal *Weight of Glory*? Do we apprehend, that our Zeal in the Cause of God will expose us to considerable *Damage* and *Loss* in our worldly *Interest*? Let us on the other hand consider, that as that *Loss* will be infinitely compensated by the Greatness of our future Reward, so there is a far greater *Loss* to be dreaded on the other Side, the *Loss* of our precious Souls, and the *Forfeiture* of their eternal *Interests* and *Hopes*. So that in this Case, to save Life by deserting the Cause of Christ, is, in the worst Sense, to lose it, by losing the *Hopes* of a blessed *Immortality*, *Matt. xvi. 25.* Are we afraid of losing the Favour of Men, and exposing our selves to their *Scorn* and *Reproach*, by our *Strictness* in our *Christian Profession*? Let us consider, how much more dangerous it is to lose the Favour of God, and to be rejected with *Scorn* by our blessed Saviour, who has told us,

That he will be asham'd of those before his Father, and his holy Angels, who are asham'd of him or of his Words, in an adulterous Generation, Mark viii. 38. In a word, God's promised Rewards infinitely surmount any temporal Advantages, which our Duty obliges us to forego; and his threatned Punishments are far more terrible than any Sufferings or Torments which we would avoid by our shameful Denial of his Truths and holy Ways. And if our Faith can realize these things to our Minds, it will maintain our Constancy, and prevent our drawing back to Perdition.

Having thus briefly suggested such Considerations as may prevent your falling on these common Stumbling-blocks laid in your way, I proceed,

Secondly, To urge upon you this Caution, against being offended or scandaliz'd, by such Arguments as the Text suggests; and I shall only mention two.

1. Consider, That our Lord has therefore forewarned us of such Offences, and of our Danger by them, that he might prevent our Falling thereby.

He has told us, *It must needs be that Offences come*, (or, that such Stumbling-blocks will be laid in our way.) So that we must expect to meet with them, and lay our Account for them: Nay, I have already shew'd you, that there are manifold Occasions of our Stumbling and Fall, which it therefore concerns us to prevent.

Nay, our Lord not only foretells us, that such Offences will come, but intimates to us the great Danger of our falling by them, when he denounces such a *Woe to the World because of Offences*. And this also is verifi'd by sad Experience. How many Thousands have been, by the scandalous Miscarriages of such as once made an eminent Profession of Christianity, either encourag'd and embolden'd to venture on the same Crimes, or harden'd in their Prejudices against, and Contempt of Religion, on the Account of the shameful Falls of such confident Pretenders to it! How many have been by the scandalous Divisions of the Christian Church, tempted to look upon Christianity it self as a doubtful uncertain thing, or induc'd to espouse the narrow Spirit of a Party to the Extinction of Catholick Love? How many have been prejudic'd against Religion by seeing it prostituted to base and carnal Ends? And how many more has the Dread of Sufferings discourag'd or driven from their holy Profession, or tempted to sinful Compliances, against the Light of their own Consciences? And when these Blocks in their way occasion the Stumbling and Fall of so many, should it not teach us the Apostle's Caution, *Thou standest by Faith, be not high-minded, but fear*, Rom. xi. 20. and that, 1 Cor. x. 12. *Wherefore let him that standeth, take heed lest he fall*? Where the Danger is so great, and yet so common, it concerns us the more to carry about our powerful Antidotes and Preservatives.

2. Consider, That such Offences are permitted by God for the Tryal of our Constancy and Steadfastness in our holy Profession.

What the Apostle speaks elsewhere concerning Heresies, may be apply'd to Offences, *There must be Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you*, 1 Cor. xi. 19. 'Tis the Glory of a Christian's Faith, when it enables him to overcome the strongest Temptations to Infidelity that can be laid in his way. It evidences our impartial Love of Divine Truth, when we embrace and maintain it in Opposition to specious Errors, and adhere to it, even tho' the Temptation of Preferment and Gain lie on the other Side. 'Tis a noble Tryal of our Piety, when we keep up the Strictness of it in a loose and degenerate Age, stemming thereby the Tide and Torrent of common Corruption. And 'tis a most convincing Proof of our Integrity (as I had occasion to suggest before) when we prefer our Duty before our most valuable secular Interest, and can choose the greatest Suffering before the least wilful Sin. We should therefore look well to our selves, that we stand fast in the Hour of Temptation; that we maintain our Constancy, notwithstanding all these dangerous Occasions of our Stumbling and Fall. We shall then

happily escape that *Woe* that is denounced against the World because of Offences.

I shall only add, that in Order to the Prevention of our being thus scandaliz'd, these two Things will be highly requisite:

1. That we do our utmost to keep our Judgments free from the Biass of worldly Interest, or sinful Affections and Lusts.

For 'tis this makes us so prone either to reject the Gospel, when we find the strict Profession of it irreconcilably opposite to our sensual Lusts, and often prejudicial to our secular Advantage; or else, to pervert and deprave it, that we may accommodate and make it bend to our Interest and our Lusts. And therefore we may observe, that our blessed Saviour subjoins in the Words following my Text, this Direction, for the Prevention of our being scandaliz'd; *Wherefore if thy Hand or thy Foot offend thee, cut them off and cast them from thee; For it is better for thee to enter into Life hale or maimed, rather than having two Hands or two Feet, to be cast into everlasting Fire; And if thine Eye offend thee, pluck it out, &c.* Ver. 8, 9. q. d. Tho' the Sin that endangers thy Stumbling and Fall be never so pleasant or profitable, tho' it be as a right Hand, or right Eye, yet abandon it, rather than expose thy self to the dreadful Consequences of such a Defection and Apostacy. 'Tis our sinful Affections and Inclinations within, that render these Offences or Occasions of Stumbling without so dangerous; and 'tis by mortifying the former, that we are best secur'd against all Hazard by the latter.

2. 'Tis also requisite, that we engage the divine Assistance by earnest Prayer.

'Tis upon that, our Steadiness and Constancy in our holy Profession chiefly depends. We must therefore by Faith and Prayer, commit our selves to God's Protection, to be kept by his Power, thro' Faith to Salvation, 1 Pet i. 5. To him we must look up, as alone able to keep us from falling, and to present us faultless before the Presence of his Glory, with exceeding Joy, Jude 24. We must therefore beg of him, that he would direct our Paths while we tread in the midst of dangerous Snares; that he would give us Wisdom to discern and avoid the Blocks and Temptations that lye in our Way, and preserve us blameless to his own heavenly Kingdom. We are then safest, when under the divine Conduct; and that must be engag'd by humble Dependence and earnest Prayer.

I now come to the

II^d Branch of the Exhortation from the Words, viz. To urge you to the utmost Care that you do not scandalize others, i. e. That you lay no sinful Occasions of falling in their Way.

To that End,

1. Beware of entertaining and propagating dangerous Errors.

When Persons of Eminency for Learning and Abilities, are once, thro' the Biass of worldly Interest, or thro' the Influence of Pride and Self-conceit, entangled in such pernicious Errors, their Name and Reputation, their Authority and Interest, their Subtlety and Wit, will greatly endanger the diffusing and spreading the Poyson of them to others. We should therefore be very humble, very serious, and impartial in our Enquiries after divine Truth, as considering that the Deference that many others pay to our Judgment, may render it highly serviceable or prejudicial to the Interest thereof, by establishing others in, or perverting them from the Belief of it. And truly this is one of the common Occasions of Falling, that often lies in our Way, viz. When we find such Opinions (as are really dangerous Errors) maintain'd by such, whose great Learning, or eminent Station give a great Weight and Authority to their Judgments. And against this Temptation we must be fortify'd, by making the Holy Scriptures alone the unerring Test and Standard of our Faith; and examining the Doctrines even of the most celebrated Teachers, by that certain Measure and Rule. For if they speak not according to the Law and the Testimony, 'tis because

because there is no Light in them. And sure if the Apostle Paul commended it as a noble Disposition in the Disciples of Berea, that they searched the Scriptures daily, to see whether what the Apostles themselves taught was agreeable thereto, Acts xviii. 11. It can never be an unwarrantable Presumption, nay, 'tis the necessary Duty of private Christians to use that Liberty, in comparing the Doctrine of ordinary fallible Pastors, with those infallible Oracles of God. But since the Generality of weaker Christians are too prone to take up their Opinions on Trust from their Teachers, and are ready to pretend want of Leisure and Capacity for more diligent and accurate Enquiries; it highly concerns those that are their spiritual Instructors and Guides, to study the Truth of God with great Impartiality and Diligence, lest they should be the unhappy Instruments of misleading and perverting the Judgments of those whom they pretend to teach the Truth as it is in Jesus. But,

2. Beware of all sinful and immoral Practices.

And O that I could effectually inculcate this Caution upon the Professors of this Age! For (as I have already hinted) these are the most common Scandals and Stumbling-blocks that occasion the Fall of others. (Of which I shall speak more in the Arguments to enforce this Caution). The Generality of Men will judge of Religion, not so much from the Holy Rules of it, laid down in the Word of God, as from the Practice of those that make the most specious Pretences to it. And if they observe the Conversation of such to be loose and disorderly, if they find them unrighteous and fraudulent in their Dealings, unmerciful Grinders of the Poor, false to their Trust, addicted to Lying, Slaves to their Appetites or Passions, grossly covetous, &c. They will be tempted hereby to censure Religion as a Cheat, and all the Professors of it, as a Set of dissembling Hypocrites. And tho' this Inference of theirs be most unjust, (as I have already shown) yet we may easily foresee they will draw such a perverse Conclusion from these Premises; and 'tis therefore our great Concern, as we value the Honour of Religion, or the Souls of Men, to lay no such Stumbling-block in their Way. O let us then walk with the utmost Circumspection, that we may not by any shameful Miscarriage give any such Offence as this, either to Jew or Gentile: Either to those within the Church, or those that are without, 1 Cor. x. 32. Let us rather study to recommend Religion, by a shining and exemplary Conversation, that others may entertain more honourable Thoughts of it, by observing in our Practice all the amiable and beneficial Fruits of it. Let it be our great Concern, to adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things, Tit. ii. 10. To walk as the Children of God, harmless, and blameless, without Rebuke, in the midst of a perverse Generation, shining as Lights in the World, Phil. ii. 15. Let that excellent comprehensive Direction of the Apostle be much upon our Thoughts; Finally, Brethren, whatsoever Things are true, whatsoever Things are honest, (or venerable) whatever Things are just, whatever Things are pure, whatever Things are lovely, or of good Report; If there be any Virtue, if there be any Praise, think on these Things, Phil. iv. 8. Let us even abstain from all Appearance of Evil, 1 Thess. v. 22. And make it one considerable Branch of our Religion, to keep our selves unspotted from the World, James i. ult. For every Stain in our Lives will be a Blemish to our Holy Profession, and hazard the defiling of others. (As I shall anon more fully observe).

3. Let us beware of that unseasonable Use of our Christian Liberty that may probably endanger the Stumbling and Fall of others.

This Caution the Apostle Paul often enforces in his Epistles. As particularly in reference to Things that had been sacrific'd to Idols: He shews, that tho' it was in general lawful to eat them, and a Christian, whose Judgment was rightly inform'd, might safely eat whatever was sold in the Shambles, or offer'd at a Feast; yet if any weak Brother present, was in danger of mis-interpreting this Use of their Liberty, and being tempted thereby, either to join with the Pagans in their Idola-

try, or to be prejudic'd against the Gospel, on the Account of this Liberty, the Apostle requires them in those Circumstances, to forbear this Use of their Christian Liberty, when it thus endanger'd the Souls of their weak Brethren. This is the Purport of that excellent Chapter, 1 Cor. viii. He shews, that a true Christian knew that an Idol was nothing, and that he might lawfully eat what was set before him; howbeit (saith he) there is not in every Man that Knowledge; For some with Conscience of the Idol to this Hour, eat it as a Thing offer'd to an Idol, and their Conscience being weak, is defiled. And therefore, tho' Meat commend us not to God, so that neither if we eat, are we the better, nor if we eat not, are we the worse; yet (saith the Apostle) take heed, lest by any Means this Liberty of yours become a Stumbling-block to them that are weak, Ver. 7, 8, 9. Nay, so tender was the Apostle of doing any thing that might thus wound the weak Conscience of a Christian Brother, and occasion his perishing, (by tempting him to counteract the Dictates of it) that he concludes with this remarkable Passage, Wherefore if Meat make my Brother to offend, (i. e. if it occasion his Stumbling and Fall,) I will eat no Flesh while the World stands, lest I make my Brother to offend, ver. 13. See also what the Apostle offers to the same Purpose, at 1 Cor. x. from Verse 25, to the End.

And here indeed is a large Field for Christian Prudence to exercise it self in; we must not satisfy our selves with the bare Lawfulness of our Actions in general, but must consider also the Expedience of them. We must not only express a Regard to our own Consciences, but to those of others. We must carefully weigh the Construction they will probably put upon our Practice, and the Use they will make of it. And if we foresee that our present Use of our Christian Liberty will probably fill them with Prejudices against Religion, or embolden them to what is sinful; if we foresee it will in all likelihood prove to them an Occasion of Stumbling or Fall; we must in such Circumstances forbear that Use of our Liberty that would be prejudicial to their Souls.

And this is all I shall suggest in general in reference to this Head, because to treat it fully, by descending to Particulars, would require an entire Discourse.

I shall therefore at present conclude this Subject with two or three Arguments, to enforce this Caution against scandalizing others.

1. We should consider, How prone others are to be thus scandaliz'd.

So that if we lay any Stumbling-block in the Way, 'tis greatly to be fear'd, that it will occasion the Fall of others. And this we have great Reason to foresee, that we shall not be excusable in presenting such a Temptation to others, even tho' the Scandal we give be not taken. As it was no Excuse for Peter's giving such pernicious Advice to our blessed Lord, to decline his approaching Sufferings, that his Advice was reject-ed: And therefore our Lord gives him that severe Reprimand, Get thee behind me Satan, Thou art an Offence (or Scandal) to Me; for thou savourest not the Things that be of God, but those that be of Men, Matt. xvi. 23.

2. We should farther consider, The mischievous Consequences and Effects that follow, when the Offences we give are taken by others, (i. e. when they stumble on the Blocks that we lay in their Way).

And alas, How little is this consider'd by those who so frequently give Offence! How little do those that first broach damnable Heresies, and pernicious Errors, consider, how far the pestilential Contagion is like to spread, and how many Souls they may be the unhappy Instruments to poison and subvert! Little do they foresee what Mischief they do to the Christian Church, and how many Thousands they endanger the Ruin of, by perverting them from the Simplicity and Purity of the Christian Faith! And O how little do the Romish Clergy, who, of all, have most grossly depriv'd the Christian Religion, consider the Guilt they have contracted, especially those of them who have been active to propagate those Errors by barbarous Cruelty!

And how little is this also consider'd by those, that under a specious Profession of Religion fall into scandalous Miscarriages! Little do such forethink, how many they may harden in their Infidelity and Contempt of serious Religion! How many Mouths they may open to blaspheme the holy Name and Ways of God! What a Reproach they may bring on the Generation of the Righteous! Little do they consider, how far the Influence of their evil Example may spread! How many may take Encouragement from it to be more bold with Temptations, and to venture upon the same sinful Practices! Those whom their sinful Example has infected, may themselves infect others, and so the Infection may spread to future Ages; the pernicious Effects of their Miscarriages may survive them, and may remain when they are dead and gone. Perhaps one single heinous Miscarriage may give such a Wound to Religion as all their Repentance can never heal; and the pernicious Influence of it, may corrupt many whom their more circumspect After-Behaviour will never reform. Many may imitate their Falls, who will never imitate their Repentance: And sure this Consideration will have great weight with us, if we have any due Sense of the Value of precious Souls, and any serious Concern to prevent their eternal Destruction: And if we have not, 'tis a shrewd Sign that we have little Concern for our own.

And therefore I add,

3. We should consider the *Woe* denounc'd by our Lord against him by whom the Offence comes.

And sure this should make all of us tremble at the Thoughts of contracting that Guilt, against which such a solemn *Woe* is denounc'd. For we plainly see hereby, that the *Guilt* and *Ruin* of those whose Fall we have occasion'd, will (without deep Repentance) be charg'd on us who have wilfully laid the *Stumbling-block* in their Way. So that we evidently hazard our own aggravated *Damnation*, when we are thus accessory to the *Sin* and consequent *Damnation* of others. They may perish in their *Iniquity*, but their *Blood* will be requir'd at our Hands. Nay, so dangerous is it thus to lay *Temptations* to fall in the Way of the meanest Christian, that our Lord in the Context tells us, *whoever shall offend (or cause to fall) one of those little ones that believe in him, it were better for him that a Mill-stone were hang'd about his Neck, and he drowned in the Sea.* And sure if this awful Consideration will not make us cautious and fearful of giving Offence (by thus laying *Stumbling-blocks* in the Way of others) no other will. O then let this terrible Sentence of our Lord sound often in our Ears, *Woe to the World because of Offences; But Woe to that Man by whom the Offence comes.*

S E R M O N XIV.

A

DISCOURSE concerning the Nature and Extent of our Lord's Dominion over the unseen World.

Rev. i. 18.

I am he that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen: And have the Keys of Hell (or rather, of the unseen World ἈΔΟΥ) and of Death.

I Need only refer you to the foregoing Verses, for understanding who it is that gives this admirable Description of himself. 'Tis one like unto the Son of Man, cloth'd with a Garment down to his Foot, girt about the Paps with a golden Girdle; his Head and Hairs white like Wool, his Eyes as a Flame of Fire, (so quick and penetrating) his Feet like unto fine Brass, his Voice as the Sound of many Waters, seven Stars in his right Hand, a sharp two-edged Sword coming out of his Mouth, and his Countenance as the Sun shining in his Strength. Expressions that import his supreme Authority, his vigilant Providence, the Steadiness and Justice of his Administration, the large Diffusion of his Gospel, and the glorious Efficacy of it, and the Majesty and Splendor of his Person. And no wonder that at so amazing a Sight as this, John is here said to fall at his Feet as dead. But our blessed Lord raises him again, and checks his Fear; and designing to employ him as his *Amanuensis* or *Penman* in his following Epistles, or Messages to the Seven Churches, and in transmitting to Posterity the other Revelations relating to the State of his Church, he does, for his Encouragement, premise this magnificent Character of himself, which I have now read for your In-

struction. *I am the First and the Last; I am he that liveth, and was dead, &c.*

For those Expressions in the Verse foregoing, *I am the First and the Last*: they are evidently taken from the Prophet Isaiah, Isai. xli. 4. and xlv. 6. where they are manifestly applied to the blessed God, as a Description of his incommunicable Glory, even of his unchangeable Eternity. *I am the First, and I am the Last, and besides me there is no God.* And accordingly 'tis the same Person, that in the 8th Verse of this Chapter, saith of himself, *I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, saith the Lord, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty.* So full a Testimony is this Passage to the Divinity of our blessed Saviour. And indeed, the Power which he ascribes to himself in the Words read, is too great for any to manage, to whom the Perfections of the divine Nature do not belong.

But for that Part of the Description which our blessed Saviour here gives of himself in my Text, there are two Branches of it that I shall distinctly consider:

I. *That he who lives was dead, and now lives for evermore. Amen.*

II. *That*

II. That (as the Reward of his dying) He has the *Keys of Hell* (or rather of the unseen World) and of *Death*.

Of these in their Order; And,

I. He that lives was dead, and now lives for evermore, Amen.

These Words I shall briefly paraphrase, and then pass on to the second Branch (which I wou'd chiefly insist on.)

I am he that liveth, i. e. I am he that have Life in my self, or am self-living; a Character that the Blessed God often assumes. For so I think we may justly interpret this Passage from that parallel Place, *John v. 26. As the Father hath Life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have Life in himself*, and consequently to be capable of Communicating it unto others. And accordingly, whereas the first Adam is said to have been only a living Soul, the second Adam, the Lord from Heaven, is said to be a quickning Spirit, i. e. impower'd to convey Life to others, having it in himself.

And this part of the Character our Lord assumes, sets off the next with the greater Emphasis, and makes it appear the more strange and remarkable, *That he was dead*. For how could he dye, that was thus self-living? For doubtless if his styling himself the living One, refer to the Divine self-living Nature communicated by the Father to the Eternal Word, in that Nature he cou'd not possibly dye: But as the Eternal Word became Flesh, or assumed a human Nature into a most near Alliance and Union to himself, so in respect of that human Nature he may be said to dye, and he did actually dye. *The Prince of Life was slain*, Acts iii. 15. *Ἀρχὴ τοῦ ζῶντος*. The Lord of Glory was ignominiously crucified, 1 Cor. ii. 8. And you know there were great and important Ends in order to the glorifying of God, and securing our Salvation, that were to be attained by the dying of the Son of God. For as he died for us, or for our Sins, (being substituted in our Place and Stead as our Expiatory Sacrifice) so all the great Ends of God's Government that were otherwise to have been secur'd by our dying for ever, were as effectually attain'd by his dying for us; and thereby the sure Foundation was laid (in point of Merit and Purchase) of our Release from the Bonds of Eternal Death, and of our Restoration to Eternal Life. He that was under no necessity of dying, (his Divine, being capable of enduring his innocent human Nature with the Privilege of Immortality) yet for our sakes became dead, that his valuable Life might become the Ransom of ours. He voluntarily submitted to this Curse of God's violated Law for us, that we might be redeem'd from it, Gal. iii. 13. His Sufferings being a valuable Consideration for our Impunity and Deliverance.

And he adds, *Behold I live for evermore, Amen*, i. e. Not only does he live as the Eternal Word, (possess'd of that Life and Glory he had with the Father before the World was, as he else-where intimates to us, *John xvii. 5.*) (For so he cou'd not dye) but he also lives for ever, in respect of that human Nature he had assum'd; that human Nature is by virtue of its Union to the Eternal Word now rais'd from Death, and dignify'd with the glorious Privilege of Immortality. He is on that account, the first-born from the Dead, the first-fruits of them that now sleep; his Resurrection, and the State of Immortal Life which his entire Nature is advanc'd to, being the Pledge and Earnest, and the satisfying Security of our Resurrection and our compleat Immortality. And on this there is a particular Remark set for our Observation and Encouragement, *behold I live for evermore, Amen*, q. d. Look not on me as dead, because I now cease to live and converse on this Earth. For lo I now live for ever, having my self conquer'd and triumph'd over Death, and being now capable to give all my faithful Servants Victory over it, and to make them Partakers of my own Immortality. I live for evermore, to pursue the great Ends of my Undertaking, till I have compleated the final Salvation of all that the Father has given me, and of all that come to him

by me. And he adds, *Amen*, to denote the infallible Certainty of this great Truth, that our Minds may be fully perswaded of it, and may no longer hesitate about it.

And now he proceeds farther to assert, what I wou'd chiefly consider.

II. That he, (as the Reward of his dying) has the *Keys of Hell and of Death*.

I say, as the Reward of his dying, both because the Connexion of these Words with the foregoing implies this, and other Scriptures expressly and clearly assert it. Of which more afterwards.

In speaking to this part of the Description our blessed Saviour gives of himself, I shall,

First consider, what we must understand by *Hades and Death*, which our Lord here saith He has the *Keys of*.

Secondly, what Power over these Two is imply'd in his having the *Keys of them*.

Thirdly shew, that this Power is the Reward of his dying.

First let us consider, what we must understand by *Ἀδης and Death*, which our Lord here saith he has the *Keys of*.

For *Death*, I think there is no matter of Debate among Expositors about it. All do agree that our Lord speaks of natural Death, that common End of all Men, that way of all the Earth, by which they must pass into the unseen State.

But Expositors are not well agreed about the Sense of the former Word [*Ἀδης*] *Hades*, which we render *Hell*. For there are three Senses here offer'd.

1. Some (as our Translators) understand it of *Hell*, or the Place and State of the Damned. That Christ has the *Keys of that*: For so they think the Word *Ἀδης* does usually signify, as in those two noted Places: The one, *Matt. xvi. 18. On this Rock will I build my Church, and the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it*; πύλαι Ἀδης. The other is, *Luke xvi. 23. where 'tis said of the deceas'd rich Man, That ἐν τοῖς Ἀδης in Hell he lift up his Eyes, &c.*

2. Others understand the Words of the *Grave*, and so make this and the following Expressions to denote the same Thing; *I have the Keys of the Grave and Death*, i. e. Can open the Grave, and recall Men from the Sleep of Death there. Which they think most fully agrees with what our Lord asserts before, of his own being dead, and now living for evermore. And doubtless, this is part of our Lord's Meaning in this Place. And to favour this Exposition, they alledge, that *Ἀδης* and the *Grave or Death*, are Expressions frequently us'd as synonymous, and particularly in reference to our Lord's Resurrection, Acts ii. 31.

But I confess, I take both these Expositions to fall short of the true Extent of the Word, and consequently to lessen that glorious Character our Lord here gives of himself, and that vast Authority he here ascribes to himself, and therefore choose to follow those,

3. Who understand *Ἀδης* of the unseen World in general, into which all the Souls of Men pass by Death.

And so it comprehends, not only the Place and Receptacle of Devils, and of damned Spirits, but the Regions and Habitations of Angels, and the perfected Spirits of the Just: In a Word, the whole invisible World.

And I choose this Sense of the Word as preferable to the other.

1. Because this is most agreeable to the Sense it bears, both in other Passages of Scripture, and in prophane Writers as well as sacred.

If we follow the most commonly receiv'd Notation of the Word, it imports the unseen State. And those Protestant Writers that treat of that Article of the Creed, have undeniably prov'd, that in those Writers that have best understood the Greek Tongue, *Ἀδης* does import the whole of the unseen World, as truly including the Place of the Blessed, as of the Damned. And indeed, the Passages quoted to this Purpose, are too many to be enumerated, and too plain to leave the Matter disputable to unprejudic'd Persons. And there

there is just Ground to conclude, that this Word does generally bear this Sense in the inspired Writers themselves. For, as the learned Grotius judiciously observes, *Hades* implies a *Place withdrawn from our Sight*; and as spoken of the *Body* refers to the *Grave*, as spoken of the *Soul* refers to the whole of the *invisibile World*: So that *Lazarus* was as truly in *Hades* as the *rich Man*, only they were in *different Regions*. And which particular *Region* the *rich Man* was in, is intimated by his *being in Torment*. And Christ's Soul being not left in *Hades*, imports no more than its not being left in a State of Separation from the *Body*: As appears by his Promise to the penitent Thief, *This Day thou shalt be with me in Paradise*, Luke xxiii. 43. And that the *Hebrew Word* [*Sheol*] to which *Hades* answers, should not be confin'd to *Hell*, is apparent from *Jacob's* desiring to go thither to his Son, Gen. xxxvii. 35.

So that there is no Ground from the common Signification and Use of the Word to confine the Sense of it, either to the *Grave*, or to the *Place of the Damned*; it does properly extend to the whole of the *unseen State*.

2. This larger Sense of the Word is most agreeable to other Passages of Scripture that speak of the *Extent of Christ's Dominion*.

For as to the *Thing it self* 'tis past all doubt, that Christ's *Authority* is by no Means confin'd to that Part of the *unseen World*, which we call *Hell*, and which is the *Region of the Damned*. For the Scriptures assure us, it extends to the *heavenly Regions*; even *Angels* as well as *glorify'd Saints* are subjected to it. *All Power in Heaven it self is given to him*. Of which more will anon occur. And consequently,

3. This larger Sense of the Word, tends far more to magnifie the Power, and enlarge the Dominion of our blessed Saviour.

It would rather sink and lessen the Character he here gives of himself, if all he meant by his having the *Keys of Hades*, were only that he has the *Key of that bottomless Pit of Darkness*, into which he can doom Devils, or the dislodged Souls of impenitent Sinners, and if he please shut them up there: For tho' this be really a Branch of his Power, yet 'tis comparatively the least valuable and glorious Part of it. And to describe himself by that, were as incongruous, as if (to use the Expressions of an excellent Divine) to magnify a Person of the highest Dignity in the Court of a mighty Prince, one should say, He is the *Keeper of the Dungeon*.

Whereas, if we take the Word in its just Latitude for the whole of the *unseen World*, including the *Regions of Light and Glory*, as well as those of *Darkness*, and the *Inhabitants of the one as well as the other*; then indeed the Description of him appears truly great and honourable, viz. *That he is Lord of the invisible World*: That in that *unseen State*, into which our dislodged Souls enter, he exercises a sovereign Empire, and all Things are at his Disposal. And how vast and illustrious a Power this implies, will more fully appear when we come to consider the Particulars included therein.

All therefore I shall add on this Head, is to subjoin,

That this Sense of the Word well agrees with what follows. Our Lord *has the Keys of the unseen World*, and of *Death*, which is the *Passage* out of this World into it. He not only rules in that *invisibile State*, but also commands this *Portal* that gives us *Entrance* into it.

Having thus fix'd the Sense of the Words, and consequently what is the Object of that Dominion and Power here ascrib'd to our blessed Saviour, viz. *The whole unseen World*, and *Death*, the *Gate* that leads into it. I come

Secondly, To shew what Power over the *unseen World*, and over *Death*, is here ascrib'd to our blessed Saviour, when 'tis said, he has the *Keys of them*.

Ans. 'Tis in general evident, that the *Keys* are the common *Ensigns of Authority*. Only they do most properly denote *ministerial Authority*, deputed to the Person who is entrusted with them. There being (as one well observes and illustrates this Matter) a manifest Allusion to the common Custom in the Courts of great Princes, to entrust the *Keys* with some great Minister, as the *Steward of the Royal Palace*: And therefore when the Prophet foretells, that *Eliakim* should be prefer'd to that eminent Station instead of *Shebna*, he tells him, *That the Government should be committed into his Hands, and the Key of the House of David should be laid upon his Shoulder; so that he should open, and none should shut, and he should shut, and none open*, i. e. None should controul what he order'd and did. And as *David's House* was typical of the *Church and Kingdom of God*, so in Allusion hereto, our Lord on the Account of his delegated Authority over it, is said to *have the Key of David*, so as to *open and none could shut*, &c. Rev. iii. 7.

And no wonder that he should have such an Authority over the *House of God* here below, which is but the *Porch or Gate*, when he has so vast a Dominion over the whole *invisibile World*, and the *different Regions* that are therein assign'd to the several *Inhabitants* thereof.

All I shall therefore farther do, is to mention some particular Instances of this vast Power that our Lord has over the *unseen World*, and over *Death*, imply'd in his having the *Keys* of the one or the other. And herein I shall carefully attend to the Light of divine Revelation.

As to his Power over the *unseen World*, we may consider these principal Branches of it.

1. All the *Inhabitants of the unseen World*, are either his *voluntary Subjects*, or at least under his *powerful Controul*.

As for *holy Angels*, the Scriptures expressly assure us of their being subjected to him. Even those *Thrones and Dominions*, those heavenly *Principalities and Powers* think it not below them to be under him, *minist'ring Spirits to us, the Heirs of Salvation*. Even they bow the *Knee* (in token of Homage and Subjection) *at the Name of our exalted Saviour*, and acknowledge him for their Lord, to the *Glory of the Father*, Phil. ii. 9, 10, &c. Our Lord is advanc'd even far above them, and they are put under his Feet, who is the *Head of his Church*, and *Head over all Things to it*, Eph. i. 21, 22. And even those *seven Spirits before the Throne*, which are in Scripture said to be the *Eyes of the Lord*, and to be sent forth into all the *Earth*, (which some judicious Expositors understand of seven *Arch-angels*, the chief Ministers of divine Providence) are also call'd the *Eyes of the Lamb*, to import their being now his *Ministers* employ'd by him in the Administration of his mediatorial Kingdom. Compare *Zach. iv. 10*. Rev. i. 4. iv. 5. v. 6.

And as *Holy Angels* are his *voluntary Subjects*, so *evil Angels* are under his *powerful Controul*.

He that on Earth could bind that *strong Man arm'd*, and at his Pleasure cast him out of Possession, has not lost his Power to restrain and subdue that *Arch-rebel* and all his *aereal Host* (as they are call'd) Eph. ii. 2. Even all things under the *Earth*, as well as those in *Earth and Heaven*, are subjected to him, Phil. ii. 10. By which the Generality of Expositors understand Devils, because tho' thro' God's present Permission the *Air* be now at least the Place of their frequent Resort, yet the *infernal Regions* are the Place they are prepared for, and reserv'd unto, as their proper Habitation. And these accursed Fiends our Lord can, when he pleases, bind up, and confine to that *bottomless Pit*, of which he also has the *Key*. For if we understand Rev. xx. 1, 2, &c. of a created Angel, doubtless he acted therein as deputed by Christ the Head of Angels. He can either check and curb their Malice, or frustrate their Designs, and over-rule their Attempts to his own Glory, and the Advancement of his own Kingdom. They are always

ways under his Restraint, and as it were held in Chains by him, being unable to stir without his Sufferance and Permission.

And what has been said in reference to good and bad Angels, is equally applicable to those other Inhabitants of the unseen World, the dislodged Souls of Men: They do either yield a voluntary, or must yield a forced Subjection to his sovereign Power.

But this leads me to add,

2. It belongs to our blessed Saviour to assign to dislodged Souls their Place and State in that unseen World which by Death they enter into.

That both are not receiv'd into the same Place, our Saviour sufficiently intimates in the Parable of the rich Man and Lazarus: The one was in Abraham's Bosom, (a Place of Rest and Bliss) the other was in a Place of Torment (as himself calls it, Luke xvi. 28.) And between these far distant Places of Abode there was a great Chasm or Gulf fix'd that render'd all Passage, from the one to the other, impossible, ver. 26. Now our Lord has the Keys of this unseen World, and accordingly, as our dislodged Spirits enter into it prepar'd or unprepar'd, it belongs to him, by his particular Sentence, (as the Preludium of his final one) either to open to them the Gate of the Heavenly Paradise, and to admit them into the Regions of the Blessed; or to open to them the Gate of the infernal Prison, and to appoint their being detained there to the terrible Judgment of the great Day. So that on his decisive Judgment it depends to what Regions in that vast invisible World we shall be translated, and what our Condition and Lot there must be. He, before whose Tribunal we must make a general Appearance in our entire Nature at the last Day, will, at Death, begin some preparatory Exercise of his judicial Power, by sending our separated Souls to their proper Place and Company, to which they are, by their past Temper and Life, most adapted. He will either then appoint his holy Angels as our powerful Guard, to convoy our departing Spirits into those particular Mansions of Glory he has allotted to them, and prepar'd for them, (as he did in the fore-mentioned Case of Lazarus) or leave those that are Satan's Vassals to become the wretched Prey of those accursed Fiends they have so voluntarily enslav'd themselves unto, who shall then seize on them, and drag them to the Regions of Darkness, and make them the miserable Objects of their unrestrained and mischievous Malice, of their arbitrary and ignominious Tyranny. In a word, he has the Key both of the Heavenly Palace, and of the infernal Abyss and Dungeon, and by his Doom it must be determin'd, in whether of these our dislodged Souls must take up their perpetual Abode.

As to the Keys of Death, or the Power of our Lord over that, we may conceive these two Branches of it.

1. That it belongs to him to determine when and how we shall die.

He commands this great Passage from this visible, to the other invisible World. We must go out of the one into the other, whenever he pleases to turn the Key. 'Tis not a matter that depends on our Pleasure, or on meer fortuitous Accidents, and unguided Chance. No, the turning the Key of Death is an Act of his ministerial Authority as the Lord both of the Quick and Dead, and therefore depends on his own wise Determination. For this Reason he assumes to himself the Power of giving us a Space of Repentance here, Rev. ii. 21. 'Tis he allots us our determinate Time of Preparation for the unseen State; 'tis his flaming Eye that observes how we do or do not improve it, and 'tis he by his authoritative Act that puts an end to our State of Trial and Day of Grace here, and by the Turn of this Key of Death transmits us to our State of final Retribution in the invisible World.

2. It implies also that it belongs to him to open the Door of the Grave, and rescue our Bodies that are detained there.

He has the Key of that Prison, and can set the Prisoners of Hope that are held there, at Liberty. He

that could not be held by the Pains of Death himself, but loosed the Bands of it, can and in due time will give our Bodies a general Release. When he shall turn this Key of Death at the general Resurrection, even all that are in their Graves shall hear his Voice, and, in Obedience to his Summons, come forth, tho' some to the Resurrection of Life, others to the Resurrection of Damnation, John v. 28, 29. Death and (Hades or) the invisible State must both resign up their Dead, i. e. the one the Bodies, the other the separated Souls kept there, that both being reunited, may stand at his final Bar, Rev. xx. 13.

It remains only,

Thirdly, to shew, that this Power of our blessed Saviour over the unseen World and over Death, is the Reward of his dying for us.

And this is intimated to us in the Connexion of these Words with the preceding; *I am he that lives and was dead; and behold I live for evermore, and have the Keys of the unseen World and of Death.* That he now lives for ever, invested with this transcendent Power, is the Consequent of his being dead. And this Truth is in other Passages of Scripture more expressly asserted. It was on the Account of his taking on him the Form of a Servant, and appearing in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, his becoming therein obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross (that most ignominious and painful Death) That God has now highly exalted him, and given him a Name above every Name, to which all in Heaven and Earth, and under the Earth, must bow in Acknowledgment of his Dominion, Phil. ii. 7, 8, 9, &c. It was in consideration of those reproachful Sufferings he so freely underwent, that he is now crowned with this unconceivable Glory and Honour, Heb. ii. 9. And indeed it was highly congruous to the Wisdom of God, that he who thus voluntarily humbled himself should be thus eminently exalted, Luke xviii. 4. That as in him the divine Nature and Life appear'd most remarkably clouded with Infirmities and Miseries, with Reproach and Shame, in him also it should appear most resplendent with the brightest Rays of Dignity and Power. It was no less agreeable to the divine Wisdom, that as Devils and wicked Men have their Head and Leader, holy Angels and good Men should have theirs. And that as the Prince of Devils gain'd his Authority by Rebellion and Pride, the Son of God should be advanc'd to his as the Reward of his Obedience and Humility. And sure it was most unexceptionably equal, that he should be particularly the Head and Lord of those whom he has redeemed and purchased at so dear Expence.

It now remains that we apply the whole. And,

I. Was he that lives, dead? O let us herein adore the marvellous Condescension of the Son of God:

For it was entirely on our account that he died, and did thus forego that Immortality that would have otherwise been the rightful Privilege of his innocent Nature, according to the original Law given to it. And truly when on the one hand we duly consider what poor despicable Worms we are, unworthy of his Notice and Regard, nay, perverse Enemies and Rebels that deserv'd his Abhorrence and Displeasure; and when we consider on the other hand the Dignity of the eternal Word tabernacled in our Flesh, we cannot sufficiently admire this Instance of unparallel'd Pity, that the Prince of Life and Lord of Glory should for our Sakes, and in our Place and Stead, thus submit to the most ignominious and accursed Death. Great indeed is the Mystery of Godliness, God manifest in our Flesh; but if possible, greater is the Mystery of his dying therein as the Substitute and Sacrifice of condemned Rebels, as the Propitiation for the Sins of a guilty World. O let us then, as often as we are call'd at the Table of the Lord, to behold the lively Representation and Effigies of himself as dead, raise up our Hearts to the most adoring Thoughts of the unconceivable Height and Depth, Length and Breadth of matchless Love therein express'd to us, which far surpasses our (adequate) Knowledge. Let this Language endear him to us, *I am he that lives and was dead.* But,

II. Does

II. Does he that was dead now live for evermore; and has he now the Keys of the unseen World and of Death? Let the Consideration hereof be matter of abundant Satisfaction and Joy to us.

It ought to be so both on his Account and on our own.

1. It shou'd be so on His account.

If we have any ingenuous Sense of that amazing Condescension of Divine Love which the Son of God express'd in *Dying for us*, we cannot but congratulate his being rais'd not only to a State of *Immortality*, but a State of such *supereminent Dignity and Glory*. It shou'd be matter of our most delightful Contemplation, that he who here died for us on an *infamous Cross* is now rais'd to so *illustrious a Throne*. That that *Head* which in Contempt was here crown'd with *Thorns*, now wears a *brighter Diadem* than any of the *Heavenly Principalities and Powers* (those *Thrones and Dominions* themselves being now subjected to him.) That he who seem'd here *insulted over* by the *Powers of Hell*, and by a *malignant World*, has now *Devils and damned Spirits* in his *Chains*, and under the absolute Controul of his sovereign Providence. That he who for the Advancement of God's Kingdom was made such a Spectacle of *Misery and Contempt* in this *visible World*, is now the *Lord of the Invisible State*, and has the rightful Disposal of the Condition and Lot of all that pass into it. That he who came on the merciful Design of unveiling to us the unseen World, and declaring the terms of our endless Happiness or Misery there, is empowered to dispense those vast *Rewards or Punishments*, accordingly as those his declared Terms are or are not sincerely comply'd with. That he who freely *laid down his Life for us*, shou'd as *Lord of the Quick and Dead* have the Power to dispose of *our's*! And that he who for our Sakes submitted to Death and conquer'd it, shou'd have the *Keys of Death*, by which he can *open the Grave*, and confer upon his sincere Followers a *blessed Immortality*. How shou'd the Remembrance of his former *Abasement* raise our Souls to the most thankful Exultation in his present *Advancement*! How shou'd we admire and applaud the wise Counsels and Contrivance of Divine Wisdom in so suitable a Reward of our Saviour's eminent Obedience and Sufferings.

2. Nay, this ought to be matter of the highest Joy and Satisfaction to us on our own account: And that in several respects which I can only briefly suggest. As,

1. That our *Blessed Lord who was dead now lives for evermore*, gives us the fullest Assurance, that his Death is an effectual means to attain all the great Ends for which he submitted to die.

Had not his Sufferings and Death been a sufficient Expiation of the Guilt of Sin, had they not fully repair'd the Honour of God's injur'd Justice, and secur'd the great Ends of his wise Government, had they not been a valuable Consideration and Price to obtain our eternal Redemption, our blessed Lord had still continued the *Captive of Death*, and could never have thus triumph'd in his Victory over it. If the Debt of Punishment had not been fully paid which the divine Wisdom and Justice requir'd, he had never been discharg'd from the Arrest of Justice, and releas'd from the Bonds of Death. But having now made a plenary Satisfaction, even God the righteous Judge has testify'd his Acceptance of it by *raising him from the Dead*, and has thereby declar'd himself to be now to all returning Sinners the *God of Peace*. And our blessed Saviour having by Death conquer'd *Death and Hell*, does now live for ever, as the powerful *Intercessor and Advocate* of all that come to God by him, being fully empowered to bestow the Blessings he has purchas'd for us; so that he appears now every way able to save to the uttermost, Heb. vii. 25.

2. Again, That *Christ lives for evermore, and has now the Power of the unseen World and Death*, gives us the highest Assurance of his being capable to carry on successfully the great Design of our Salvation here, and to compleat it at last.

It gives us the highest Assurance that he is capable to carry on the great Design of our Salvation here.

Does he live for ever, and that as our *Intercessor* in Heaven, he is then always capable to recommend all our Services, and all our Prayers to the *Audience and Acceptance* of his heavenly Father. He is then capable to wash our guilty Souls in the *Laver* of his precious Blood, and by that prevalent Plea to obtain all that renewed Pardon and Forgiveness, which our daily Offences make us stand in so infinite need of. So that we may justly triumph with the Apostle, *Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died; nay, rather that is now risen again, and who is at the right Hand of God, and there makes Intercession for us*, Rom. viii. 34. Does he live for evermore? How capable then is he of maintaining and increasing our spiritual Life by the constant Communications and Influences of his quickning Spirit? How easily can our glorious Head diffuse vital Spirits to all the Members of his mystical Body for their spiritual Nourishment and Growth? So that of his Fulness we may receive Grace for Grace, and because he lives, we shall also live, and that abundantly. John x. 10.

Nay, this gives us the highest Assurance that he is capable of compleating our Salvation at last.

He that has the *Keys of the invisible World* can receive our departing Souls, and secure their happy Entrance into the Mansions of Glory. He that commands all the *Host of Angels*, can appoint a powerful Guard of them to secure our safe Passage thro' this lower Region of the Air, (the present Territory of the *Powers of Darknes*) till we arrive at the superior Regions of the Blessed. And by him our particular Lot and Station in that *unseen State* shall be assigned. So that he is capable of performing all he has promis'd concerning our Reception into his Presence, and into those Mansions which are prepared for us in his Father's House. And tho' our Bodies may be for some time detained in the Power of the Grave, yet he has the *Keys of Death*; and can, when his appointed Time is come, unlock the Doors of those earthly Dormitories, and awaken our sleeping Dust there. He can as easily by his commanding Voice loose the Bands of Death in which all Mankind are held, as he did once those of Lazarus. And we shall as readily obey as he, who as soon as our Lord said, *Lazarus, come forth*, immediately came forth, tho' bound Hand and Foot, John xi. 44. He that has himself conquer'd Death, can and will then entirely abolish it; so that Death shall be absolutely swallow'd up in endless Life.

3. Again, That our Lord Jesus thus lives for evermore, having this Dominion over the unseen World, and over Death, should be matter of Joy to us, as in him we see our own Nature advanc'd to the highest Dignity and Glory. For this *Lord of the invisible World* has carried our human Nature into those highest Heavens, and lives as *God-Man* there for ever. And as God-man, and our Mediator, he is invested with this transcendent ministerial Authority in order to his prosecuting and compleating the grand Designs of his mediatory Kingdom, to the Glory of the Father, and the Salvation of his Church. With what Satisfaction then should we behold those bright Rays of Glory where-with our Nature shines by virtue of its Union to the eternal Word! But,

III. This Description of our blessed Saviour represents him as a most deserving Object of our Esteem, our Reverence and Subjection, our Faith and Trust.

1. He is a most deserving Object of our highest Esteem and Veneration.

For how illustrious does this Character represent him, That he lives for evermore, and has the Keys of the unseen World, and of Death!

How vast and universal is his Dominion that has thus all Power not only in Earth, but in Heaven, also committed to him? How extensive is his Authority that thus reaches to both Worlds. In this World, all Men are his Subjects by Right and Obligation; all called Christians are so by publick Profession; all sincere Christians by cordial

dial Consent. Nay, all Christian Magistrates are as truly his deputed Officers, in reference to the Power of the Sword, as Ministers in reference to that of the Word. If we look up to the other World, how spacious are the Regions in which he there presides! And if this dull Earth which is the Sediment of the Creation, be so full of Vitality, so abundantly replenish'd with living Inhabitants, shall we think those immense Regions above, a solitary uninhabited Desert? Or may we not far more reasonably conjecture, that they as far transcend this despicable Spot in the Number of glorious Inhabitants, as they do in external Brightness and Splendour? How amazingly great and large then are the unseen Territories in which our Saviour exercises this ministerial Authority!

Him all the Host of Angels adore and serve; before him Devils tremble and crouch: By his particular Sentence, all dislodged Souls are disposed into the upper or lower Regions of the vast unseen World, into the Regions of Light, or Territories and Abyss of Darkness: And at his powerful final Summons the Gates of Death shall be unlock'd, the Graves open'd, and the Bodies that sleep there, recover'd to endless Life. O what admiring Thoughts should we entertain concerning the Majesty, the Grandeur, and the unbounded Authority of our exalted Saviour! How humbly should we join with all in Earth and Heaven in bowing the Knee to him, and in confessing him to be Lord, to the Glory of the Father! Phil. ii. 9, 10, &c.

Nay, from this Character we may also infer,

2. That he is the most deserving Object of our Subjection and Reverence.

He that is the Lord of the invisible, is much more the rightful Lord of this lower visible World. He that can command Angels themselves has a much more evident and undeniable Claim to the Service of Men. For he took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16. He became Partaker of our Flesh and Blood, and therefore died for us, and rose again that he might be the Lord of the Living and the Dead. So that he has now a sovereign Right to us by virtue of his Redemption of us. We are his rightful Subjects as we are his purchased Possession.

O let us then reverence his Authority as our exalted Prince and Saviour. Let us freely give up our selves to him, and to the Father by him. Let us voluntarily put our Necks under his Yoke, and become his willing People in the Day of his mighty Power, Psal. cx. 3. Let us cheerfully recognize and own his Authority over us. Let us cordially devote our selves to his faithful perpetual Service. Let us resolutely engage in a Course of unfeigned Obedience to him.

And it should effectually induce us thereto, when we consider, That as he has so unquestionable a Right to our Subjection and Service, so he is capable to reward or punish us as we become his obedient Subjects, or continue obstinate Rebels against his Authority. He has the Keys of the unseen World, even of Hell it self. So that as he can abundantly recompense our Fidelity, by admitting our dislodged Souls into the Regions of Light and Life, so he can avenge our Imperswasibleness and perverse Refusal of his Government, by sending them to the infernal and dark Abyss, the Place of Horror and Torment. How then should we revere his Authority and Power, into whose Hands and Disposal we must so certainly fall! How should we open our Hearts and give him Admission into them, who now knocks there by the Calls of his Gospel, and the Solicitations of his holy Spirit, as ever we expect he should open to us the Door of the celestial Paradise, and the Gate of the Heavenly Jerusalem!

And we are concern'd to do this the more speedily, because he has the Key of Death, and can, by the turning of that, put an end when he pleases to our Day of Grace, by putting an end to our natural Life. How dangerous is it then to put off his importunate renewed Calls with tedious Excuses and Delays, who can so soon, even whenever he sees fit, turn us out of this

visible, into the vast unseen World, and change our State of Trial for a State of final Retribution! It depends on his Pleasure, how long our Space of Repentance and Time of Preparation for Eternity shall last; how many more Invitations and Calls shall be yet tender'd to us; and it were most inexcusable Folly to trifle and dally with him, who needs do no more than turn this Key of Death, and our Souls, prepar'd or unprepar'd, must dislodge and pass into an unseen eternal State.

Nay, this Character shews us,

3. That he is a most deserving Object of our Faith and Trust.

What just Ground have we (supposing that we have sincerely given up our selves to him) to depend on him for our continued Pardon and Peace with God, who was dead indeed, (having undertaken to redeem our forfeited Life by the Ransom of his own) but is now alive, and lives for evermore! What great Reason have we to rely on him for all necessary Supplies of Grace, in order to our Growth and Progress in spiritual Life towards the Perfection of Life eternal, who is now the exalted and living Head of his Church, and the never-fading Root of divine Life to it! What Ground have we to expect the gracious Acceptance of all our unfeigned Homage and Worship, Obedience and Service, who have such an ever-living Mediator that always appears in the divine Presence for us! Nay, with what Confidence may we commend our departing Spirits into the merciful Hands of our blessed Redeemer, when we know, that as he has the Keys of Death, and will not therefore translate us from this World till his Grace has prepared us for a better, so he has the Keys of the unseen World, and will appoint us our Lot and Place there! How cheerfully then may we consign those departing Souls into his Disposal, which we have now committed as a Trust to his gracious Care, as expecting he will effectually provide for their Safety and Happiness in that unknown State they are entering into. Nay, how assuredly may we expect the glorious Restoration of our Bodies themselves from him that has the Keys of Death, and can therefore easily open the Doors of the Grave?

IV. We may hence infer, How awful a thing it is to pass from hence by Death into the unseen World.

For it is here mention'd as an Instance of the eminent Authority of our blessed Saviour, that he has such a Dominion over the unseen World, and over this Entrance into it. None pass thro' the one to the other without his judicial Appointment and Decision. But of that I may have occasion to speak more from another Subject.

V. Hence we may infer the unspeakable Happiness of those that are interested in this Blessed Saviour, and the Misery of those that are not.

The former are not only secure of the Efficacy of his present Mediation and Grace to carry on the great Design of their Salvation, but have the most comfortable Prospect of the final Consummation of it. Life and Death are both theirs, as being in his Dispose who will order and over-rule them for their eternal Good. So are things present, and, which is far more, things to come; I mean the grand Events and Concerns of the future unseen World. They not only live to Christ, but die in him, even into his gracious Hands, to whom the Power is entrusted of determining their unchangeable State, and the Place of their eternal Abode. They fall by Death into his Disposal who has the Key of the celestial House, and can so open, that none shall be able to shut it, and who has assur'd them, that where he is, they shall also be.

For the latter, viz. Those impenitent Sinners that have no Interest in this Blessed Saviour, their Condition is most miserable: Not only are they condemned already, (by the virtual Sentence of God's Holy Law) not only does the Wrath of God now abide on them, but they are remedilessly expos'd to that more terrible Vengeance which the Gospel denounces against the Neglecters of its great Salvation. And O how dismal is their

Case

Case that must appear before a just and Sin-avenging God, without any *Advocate* or *Mediator* to plead their guilty Cause, and interpose between them, and that tremendous Justice of his, which is a *consuming Fire*! Nay, how deplorable and forlorn is the Case of those that must fall into his Hands as their righteous Judge, whose marvellous Love they have despis'd, whose just Authority and Laws they have trampled on, and whose invaluable Offers of Mercy they have slighted and refused! What can they expect from an abused and affronted Saviour, but that awful Doom, *Those mine Enemies that would not that I should reign over them, bring them before me, and slay them!*

With what Consternation and Horror will they find

themselves under his decisive Authority and Power, as their avenging Judge, whose Bowels of Pity they have spurn'd at, when he would have been their merciful Saviour! How will they look on him whom they have pierc'd by their Sins, especially by their *Impenitency* and *Ingratitude*, and wail at the Sight of him, when he shall come in flaming Fire to execute Vengeance on them that knew not God, and obey'd not his Gospel! How will it heighten their Amazement and Despair to have their terrible Sentence of *Condemnation* pronounc'd by the Mouth of an incens'd Redeemer, and to be adjudg'd to Hell by him, that in vain offer'd and attempted to restore them to Heaven.

S E R M O N XV.

The OFFICE of a SCRIPTURAL BISHOP describ'd and recommended. AN ORDINATION SERMON.

1 Tim. iii. Ver. 1.

This is a true Saying, If a Man desire the Office of a Bishop, he desires a good Work.

IN order to a Man's regularly aspiring to, and faithfully discharging the important Duties of a *Scriptural Bishop*, 'tis highly requisite he should understand and consider the *Extent* of his sacred Office, that his *Diligence* may bear some Proportion to the *Greatness* and the *Difficulty* of his *Work*. And those that come under his pastoral Inspection and Care are as much concern'd to consider the *excellent Design* and *beneficial Tendency* of that holy *Function*, that they may (according to the *Apostle's* Injunction) *know such as labour among them, and are over them in the Lord, and may esteem them very highly in Love for their Works sake*, 1 Thess. v. 12, 13, &c. And accordingly the Words I have read will give me very proper Occasion to treat on both these Heads, and to apply my self both to *Pastors* and to their *Flocks*.

The *Apostle* designing, in the Verses following my Text, to lay down the *Characters* that are requisite in all those that were to be chosen and constituted as *Bishops* or *Deacons* in the Christian Church, he prefaces his *Characters* of a *Christian Bishop* with this remarkable Commendation of his Office: *He that desires the Office of a Bishop, desires a good Work*. And this Passage he introduces with a particular Solemnity, not unusual with him when he delivers any Truth of great Moment and Weight, and which deserves our most attentive Consideration. *This is a true Saying, if any Man desire, &c.* (See the like Preface to other important Truths, 1 Tim. i. 15. 1 Tim. iv. 9. 2 Tim. ii. 11.) He calls it a *true Saying*, because at first View it might appear to be a *Paradox*. *Civil Offices* among Men are wont to be sought with an eager Ambition, and to be very forward in aspiring to them is no great Mark of a *virtuous Disposition*. They are often (when attended with great Honour and Profit) most restlessly sought by those that deserve them least. But here the *Apostle* proposes this sacred Office as the noble Object of a most re-

gular and commendable *Ambition*. For if a Man truly understand what the Office it self obliges him to, and what eminent Labour and Patience and Self-denial are requisite to discharge it aright, he can have no Temptation to covet so painful a Work; and nothing but an ardent Desire of the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls, can make him willing to undertake it. And indeed all those had need to take a right and accurate View of it, that would approve the Sincerity of their Intentions in aspiring to it, to the Eye of an Heart-searching God.

I shall therefore, in treating on this remarkable Saying of the *Apostle*,

I. Consider, what the Office of a Bishop is, which he here commends as the Object of a most laudable Ambition.

II. I shall shew, that 'tis a Work that requires the most laborious Diligence, and yet a good (or excellent) Work, highly beneficial to others, and honourable to the Person himself. And,

Lastly, I shall apply my self both to such as undertake the Office and Work, and those that enjoy the Benefit of their laborious Inspection and Care.

I. I shall consider what the Office of a *Scriptural Bishop* is, which the *Apostle* commends as the Object of a most laudable Ambition.

And here I am sensible that I not only enter on a controverted Subject, but must treat of it with great Disadvantage. Long Custom for many Ages has affix'd those Ideas to the Name of a Bishop, which were wholly unknown in the *Apostle's* Time, when these sacred Writings were penn'd. And *Επισκοπη* indeed if the *Bishoprick* or *Episcopacy* the *Apostle* speaks of were the same thing that too many of those apprehend it to be, who most vehemently aspire to it, viz. a grand and pompous Sine-cure, a Domination over all the Churches and Ministers in a large District manag'd by others as his Delegates, but requiring little Labour of a Man's own, and all this supported by

large Revenues, and attended with considerable secular Honours; I say, if the Bishoprick the Apostle speaks of were no other than this, I should despair of being able to vindicate the Truth of this Saying. We must not therefore bring our own pre-conceiv'd Opinion of the Bishop's Office to the holy Scriptures, but borrow our Notion of it from thence; and then I doubt not you'll easily see and acknowledge the Truth of what the Apostle speaks concerning it, *That whoever desires it, desires a good Work.*

Accordingly, in speaking of the Office of a scriptural Bishop, I shall,

First, Consider the Object of his Inspection and Care.

Secondly, The several Branches of his Office.

First, Let us consider the Object of a scriptural Bishop's Inspection and Care.

A Bishop being the same thing as an Inspector or Overseer, it will greatly tend to clear the Nature of his Office, to consider *Whom* he is represented, in Scripture, as taking the Charge and Oversight of. And if we take an impartial View of all those Passages wherein Bishops are mentioned in Scripture, I doubt not we shall find that a particular Church was the proper Object of a Bishop's Inspection and Care. It was a particular Flock he was to oversee, to feed and rule, and that usually in conjunction with several others as his Colleagues in the same Office and Charge.

The first express Mention we have of Bishops is in that noted Passage, *Acts xx. 28.* We read at *ver. 16, 17, &c.* that the Apostle Paul hastning to Jerusalem, where he designed, if possible, to be at the Day of Pentecost, sent from Miletus to Ephesus, and called the Elders of the Church. And these Elders he exhorts at *Verse 28.* To take heed to themselves and to all the Flock, over the which the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops, to feed the Church of God, which he had purchased with his own Blood.

Here we not only see the Truth of what Chrysostom, Jerom, Theodoret, Oecumenius, and Theophylact observe, that the same Persons were in Scripture call'd indifferently Elders and Bishops; Bishops from their Office of inspecting and feeding the Flock, and Elders from their Age and Authority; but we also see what was the Object of the Oversight and Care of these Bishops, that Flock, that Church of God that was then gather'd in the City of Ephesus. I know indeed the learned Dr. Hammond pretends here, that the Church of God includes all the Apostle had converted in Asia, and so included many particular Churches; and that the Elders sent for to Ephesus were so many Bishops of Asia, in the modern Sense. But the Weakness of this Pretence plainly appears from the Text, which expressly saith, that the Apostle sent for the Elders of the Church of Ephesus, not for those of Asia. That his Haste in going to Jerusalem, would not permit the sending to all the Parts of Asia, to gather together so many Bishops in the modern Sense, to meet him at Miletus; unless we suppose the greatest Part of them to have been scandalous Non-Residents, and to have learn'd the modern Practice of spending the greatest Part of their Time out of their own Dioceses, and at a Distance from their pretended Charge. Besides, the Christian Congregations dispers'd thro' a large Province are never in Scripture called a Church in the Singular, but always Churches in the Plural Number. As we read of the Churches of Asia, *1 Cor. xvi. 19.* The Churches of Macedonia, *2 Cor. viii. 1.* The Churches of Galatia, *Gal. i. 2.* And this is the more confirm'd by what we read elsewhere in this Book of the Acts, viz. That wherever Paul and Barnabas planted Christian Churches, they ordained Elders in every Church, [*κατ' ἐκκλησίαν.*] And here we find these Elders in the Church of Ephesus, the Bishops or Inspectors of the Flock of God there.

Again, The next express mention we find of Bishops, is in the Apostle's Inscription of his Epistle to the Saints at Philippi, Paul and Timotheus the Servants of Christ, to all the Saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the Bishops and Deacons, *Phil. i. 1.* And here we plainly

see, that the Object of the Inspection and Care of these Bishops were the Saints at Philippi. They were the Flock whom these Bishops were oblig'd to feed, and whom these Deacons assisted in taking care of the Poor, and serving Tables among them. As for Dr. Hammond's Pretence, that Philippi was the Metropolis of Macedonia, and therefore many Bishops in the modern Sense might be present there under the Metropolitan of Philippi, nothing can be more destitute of the least Probability; For not to mention the concurrent Judgment of most of the Fathers, that these Bishops were no other than the Presbyters or Elders of the Church of Philippi, and that Thessalonica, and not Philippi, was the Metropolis of Macedonia; 'tis sufficient to suggest, that such pompous Titles as those of Provincial and Metropolitan Bishops were very remote from the Simplicity and Humility of the Apostolical Age. And the Text it self refutes these Pretensions. For the Apostle writes to no other Bishops and Deacons but what were at Philippi with the Saints there, and has not one Word of the Bishops and Deacons throughout all Macedonia. And as every single Church had several Deacons, so it had several Bishops appointed to take the Oversight of it.

The next express Mention of a Bishop is in my Text and the following Verses. And from the fifth Verse we may see what was the Object of the Bishop's Care, viz. The Church of God, (i. e. that particular Church that was committed to his Care) *If a Man know not how to rule his own House, how shall he take care of the Church of God?* 'Tis that Church which is distinguish'd from those that rule in it, and in the Management of the Affairs whereof the Deacon was to be an assistant Officer, that this scriptural Bishop was to employ his faithful Labours and Care in.

The next express Mention we have of a Bishop is in the Epistle to Titus, where he is represented as one of those Elders which Titus was to ordain in every City (or Town) of Crete, to take Care of the particular Churches that were planted in them. For the Apostle giving there this Character of such an Elder, that he must be blameless, suggests this Reason for it, *For a Bishop must be blameless as the Steward of God.* For which Inference there were no Ground if an Elder and Bishop were not different Titles of the same Office. Every City or Town then, in which a Christian Church was planted, was to have its Elders or Bishops constituted as God's Stewards in that Part of his House and Family.

And, to add no more, when the Apostle Peter addresses himself to the Elders of the several Churches scattered thro' Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, he charges them to feed the Flock of God among them, taking the Oversight thereof, [*ἐπισκοπῆντες*] or acting the Part of Bishops towards it. Every particular Church of God, was as one of his Lots, (see *1 Pet. v. 3.* τῶν κλήρων.) The Expression contains an Allusion to the Land of Canaan, the particular Inheritances whereof were divided by Lot. So are particular Churches as so many Possessions or Lots in God's Heritage or universal Church. And the Elders plac'd in each Lot were to take a particular Inspection and Care thereof. And the Object of their Care was the Flock of God among them, (i. e. with whom they did daily reside and converse, to whom they were capable of being Examples) whereas they could not feed those Flocks with whom they seldom or never once convers'd; nor be Examples to many Thousands that never saw their Faces, nor had any Opportunity to know or observe their holy and blameless Conversation.

These are all the Places I remember where Bishops are expressly mention'd; to which I shall only subjoin two more where they are plainly intended, tho' under other Titles, and where the Object of their Inspection and Care is manifestly describ'd as the same.

The one is, *1 Thess. v. 12, 13.* Where the Apostle writing to the Church of the Thessalonians, beseeches them, *To know those that labour'd among them, and were over them in the Lord, and admonish'd them, and to esteem them very highly in Love for their Work's sake.* No doubt

this Church of *Thessalonica* had its *Bishops* and *Deacons* as well as that at *Philippi*, and the *Duties* here mention'd are such as might be easily paid by a particular *Christian Church* to their *Pastors*, but could never be paid by many *Scores* or *Hundreds* of *Churches* to one *Pastor*. How should those esteem him highly for his *Work's* sake, who perhaps never heard him preach, and never enjoy'd any of his *Labours*? How should he admonish all those, of whom he scarce knows the ten Thousandth Man, and to whose Case and Conversation he is for the most part an entire Stranger? If then the *Presidents* of this particular Church were *scriptural Bishops*, we see what their Charge was.

The other Passage is in *Heb. xiii. 17.* where the Apostle exhorts them to obey those that rul'd over them, (or their Guides) [*ἡγουμένων*] For (saith he) they watch for your Souls, as those that must give an Account. And sure if a Man must undertake the Care of no more Souls than he may be able to watch over in order to his giving an Account of them, we may easily conclude that he will never take all the Souls in a numerous modern *Diocess* for the Objects of his Inspection and Care, if ever he expect to give up his Account with any Comfort or Hope. He will rather think the Souls of a numerous Congregation a heavy Weight, and be under very anxious Thoughts lest many of them should miscarry for want of his Vigilance and Care.

'Tis indeed true, That in the *Postscripts* to the second Epistle to *Timothy*, and that to *Titus*, the one is mention'd as ordain'd the first Bishop of the Church of the *Ephesians*, and the latter as ordain'd the first Bishop of the Church of the *Cretians*. But those *Postscripts* (as all learn'd Men know) are of no Authority. The Name of *Phrygia Pacatiana*, at the End of the first Epistle to *Timothy*, was not in Use till the declining Time of the *Roman Empire*. The Words in the *Postscript* of the second Epistle to *Timothy*, first ordain'd Bishop, &c. are not, as *Beza* observes, found in the ancient Copies, nor in the *Syriack Version*. And the Epistle to *Titus* was not, as the *Postscript* saith, written from *Nicopolis*, for then the Apostle, *Chap. iii. 12.* would have said, *I have determin'd to winter here, and not there.* These two Persons therefore were not, in the scriptural Sense of the Word, *Bishops*, but *Evangelists*, (as *Timothy* is expressly call'd, *2 Tim. iv. 5.*) Now the Office of *Evangelists* was not confin'd to any particular Flock or Charge, no more than that of the *Apostles*; they were deputed by them to plant Churches, or visit the Churches that were already planted, and to give Directions and Orders to those *Elders* or *Bishops* which they had set over them: And therefore these *Evangelists* have no where the Title of *Bishops* given them in Scripture. They were indeed stiled *Bishops* by some *Historians* of the succeeding Ages, when the Name of *Bishop* and *Elder* begun to be distinguish'd, but it was by the same gross Impropriety of Speech as the Apostle *Peter* was call'd Bishop of *Rome*, and the Apostle *James*, Bishop of *Jerusalem*, whereby they as little consulted the Extent of their apostolical Office and Dignity as in our modern Language he would consult the Dignity of a *diocesan Prelate*, that should entitle him the Curate of a Country Village. But of this I may have occasion to speak more afterwards.

Upon the whole, we never once read in Scripture of those called *Elders* or *Ministers of the Gospel*, as any part of the scriptural *Bishops* Charge. They are no where mentioned as subjected to his Authority, or deriving their ministerial Power from him, and exercising it in Subordination to him as their Superior or Governor. The Scriptures do indeed suppose these scriptural *Bishops* to have been under the Direction of the *Apostles*, and those *Evangelists* whom they employed in the Settlement of the Churches they planted, but never suppose the *Presbyters* to be under theirs. On the contrary, the Office as well as Name of *Elders* and *Bishops* was then the same, and a *Christian Flock* or Church was the Object of their joint Inspection and Care: And there seems to be this obvious Reason, why the Apostle ordain'd several such

Elders or *Bishops* in every *Christian Church* they plant'd, not only for the Benefit of those particular Churches themselves, but for the speedier Propagation of Christianity round about them: And especially, that there might be in every such Church a *Seminary of Pastors* fit to take the Care of new Churches, when the larger Diffusion of the Gospel, and Conversion of Infidels, might give a proper Occasion to erect them.

I have resolv'd to confine my self to the holy Scriptures, or else it were not difficult to shew, that even when the Name of *Bishop* and *Elder* came to be distinguish'd, the *Bishop* was no more for some considerable time, than the *Senior Pastor* of a particular Flock or Congregation, which he govern'd in conjunction with the rest of the *Elders* of it. Such the *Bishop* of *Ignatius* appears to be, notwithstanding all the magnifying Expressions he uses to distinguish him from, and give him the Preference before the rest of the *Presbyters*. A Church was [*Plebs Episcopo coadunata*] a *Christian Flock* united to their *Bishop*. And every *Bishop* had one *Altar* or *Communion Table* for that one Flock. There is (saith *Ignatius*) to every Church one *Altar* and one *Bishop*, together with the *Elders* and *Deacons*. And this *Primacy of Order*, which the eldest *Presbyter* first claim'd on the account of Seniority, was after given upon the People's Election, and rather with a Regard to Merit and Abilities than meer Seniority, but without any real Distinction of Office. But to treat this Matter fully, and set it in a true Light, would require a Volume rather than a Sermon.

I shall therefore now proceed,

Secondly, To consider the several Branches of a scriptural Bishop's Office.

And of these I will mention the Principal with all the Brevity I can.

That a scriptural Bishop was to teach or instruct his Flock in the Principles of the Christian Religion, delivering to them God's holy Truths and Laws, will be easily granted. 'Tis to qualify him for this part of his Work, that the Apostle makes this one Part of his Character, that he should be [*διδάσκων*] apt to teach, *v. 2.* Nay, he must not only be a Teacher, but a Defender of the Christian Faith, in order to the convincing of Gain-sayers. He must behave himself in the House of God as a Buttress and Pillar of Truth. (For these Words should be apply'd to *Timothy*, not to the Church, which is the House of God it self, and not a Pillar in it, *1 Tim. iii. 15.*)

Again, a scriptural Bishop must be the Guide of his Flock in all Acts of publick Worship and Devotion. He must be their Mouth in Prayer and Praise to God, as well as his Mouth to them in his publick Instructions. He must celebrate among them all those Acts of natural and instituted Worship, all those holy Ordinances that tend to their Conversion to, or their Progress in a Life of Faith and Holiness, of heavenly Hope and Joy. For these sacred Institutions are to the Sheep of Christ as the Pastures where they may feed and rest, and as the gentle Streams where they may find Refreshment. And the constant and regular Administration of them is one undoubted Instance of their feeding the Flock committed to them.

Again, a scriptural Bishop must rule the Flock that he has the Inspection of.

And indeed this is an essential Branch of his Office. His Obligation to feed them does necessarily include an Authority to govern them by the Administration of sacred Discipline. The very Name of a Pastor carries Authority with it, and sacred as well as civil Power is frequently represented under this Metaphor of Feeding, to imply the tender Affection and Care that it should be manag'd with. Accordingly 'tis one Character requisite in a scriptural Bishop, that he should rule his own House well, as being otherwise very unfit to be entrusted with the Care of ruling the Church of God. He is constituted a Steward in the House of God, having the Keys thereof committed to him, to admit into it at first by Baptism, to exclude the openly scandalous and impenitent (whose Example would endanger the Infection of others) and to restore such Offenders, upon their

their credible Profession of Repentance, to Church-Communion.

'Tis another Part of his Office to be a bright Pattern to his Flock.

He must therefore take heed to himself as well as to them, that his own Practice may be conformable to his Instructions. And that those Graces and Virtues may be exemplify'd in his own Life, which he would recommend by his Doctrine. And 'tis for that end the Apostle insists so much on a Bishop's being blameless, and free from all those scandalous Blemishes that might stain the Honour of his Profession, and blast the Success of his Labours. Those Elders whom the Apostle Peter beseeches to feed and inspect the Flock of God among them, he also urges to become Ensamples to it, 1 Pet. v. 3. Priests under the Law were to have no remarkable natural Blemish, and those under the Gospel should have no notorious moral Blemish. For such vicious Priests would cause those Offerings of the Lord to be abhor'd which they presented with their unhallow'd Hands. See 1 Sam. ii. 17.

Again, 'tis another Branch of the scriptural Bishop's Office, ministerially to invest others in the same Office, when any such Occasion offers.

Ordinis est ordinare. The Power of Ordination (or of setting others apart to the ministerial Office, by Fasting and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands) belongs to all who are themselves dignify'd with it. This Power was in the Apostle's Time actually exercised both by those extraordinary, and those ordinary Officers that were constituted in the Church. Sometimes it was exercised by the Apostles, and such as were their Fellow-Labourers in their unfixed Ministry. Thus we read of Saul and Barnabas, that they ordain'd Elders in every Church. Sometimes Evangelists were employ'd. Thus Titus is appointed by the Apostle to ordain Elders in every City in Crete, Tit. i. 3. And Timothy is here instructed in the Characters of a scriptural Bishop, that he might be cautious whom he set apart for that Office, and might not suddenly (and rashly) lay on Hands upon any, 1 Tim. v. 22. At other times, we read of these scriptural Bishops or Elders employ'd in that Service: So they were in the Ordination of Timothy himself, tho' an Evangelist, as appears from that known Place, 1 Tim. iv. 14. Neglect not the Gift that is in thee which was given thee by Prophecy, with the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery. 'Tis true indeed, we are not by Gift to understand his Office of an Evangelist, but only some extraordinary Gift bestow'd upon him, when according to the Prophecies concerning him, he enter'd upon it. But that the laying on of Hands does refer to his Ordination to Office, is evident from the following Words, wherein the Apostle urges him to that Diligence and Fidelity in the Discharge of his Office, that was highly requisite to his Heaver's Salvation and his own. And we know that the Presbytery (or Bench of Elders) did not convey any extraordinary Gifts by Imposition of Hands: It was only for the investing him in his sacred Office that they laid them upon him. Nay, tho' we read elsewhere of the Apostle's laying his own Hands upon him also, 2 Tim. i. 6. yet this no way invalidates the Argument: For either the Apostle's Imposition of Hands was solely for the Conveyance of some extraordinary Gift; or, if us'd for the Conveyance of the Office of an Evangelist, 'tis evident that the Hands of the Presbytery were join'd with his. For which there were no just Ground if the Power of Ordination had not belong'd to them. Nor is this the only, tho' a very solid Evidence of ordinary Ministers being concern'd in such a Solemnity. For we read of the Teachers as well as Prophets concurring to set apart Paul and Barnabas, and that by Fasting and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands, to the Work whereunto the Spirit of God had call'd them. And tho' I do not think this was in a strict Sense an ordaining of them to the apostolical Office, (for Paul was an Apostle by an immediate Commission from Christ, and Barnabas was probably an Evangelist before) yet it was a Separation of them for a special and eminent Service in the Exercise of their Ministry; and those that were empower'd to send them forth in this solemn manner

to such a Work, could not want a Power to ordain any others to the Office of an ordinary Pastor or Teacher, which themselves were invested in. We may therefore justly reckon the Power of giving such an ordinary Mission to ordinary Officers in the Church to belong to a scriptural Elder and Bishop; and no human Canons can justly debar him from it.

And the Reasonableness of this Supposition is very obvious: For since all that the Ordainers have to do is the Designation of the Person whom Christ has qualify'd for the Office, and call'd to it, and the solemn Investiture of him in it, why should not those that are already dignify'd with the Office, and capable Judges of the Characters that should qualify him for it, be as capable of ministerially investing him in it? Why should not the same Commission that empowers them to preach the Gospel, empower them to commit that Doctrine they preach to faithful Men, that may instruct others also? If the Apostles Commission, Matth. xxviii. 19, 20. empower'd them to ordain others, it does also empower all those ordinary Pastors to do it, with whom Christ has promis'd his Presence to the End of the World.

I know indeed, 'tis confidently pretended, that the Apostle Paul assign'd to Timothy and Titus such a Superintendency and Care over many Churches as Diocesan Bishops now claim; that he entrusted the sole Power of Ordination with them; and that Diocesan Bishops are their only Successors in this Power; and consequently, the sole Power both of Church-Government and Ordination is entail'd on them, and their Successors; and no Presbyters can lay any Claim to either, their Ordinations being (say some) wholly null and invalid; or (as others say) grossly irregular and unwarrantable, and their Acts of Church-Government an Usurpation of a Power that belongs not to them.

To this I shall only suggest the following Particulars by way of Answer.

1. 'Tis granted that the Apostles did exercise a general Superintendency and Care over all the Churches they planted, and that the Evangelists were employ'd by them as their Assistants therein. But,

2. There is no Evidence from the holy Scriptures, of their having left any to succeed them in this general Superintendency and Care.

No Diocesan Bishops ever pretended to such an unlimited Superintendency over all the Churches, as the Apostles actually exercis'd, (except the late senseless Pretence of the Roman Bishops, founded on the Dream of St. Peter's Supremacy over the rest of the Apostles, and their succeeding him therein) They have their Authority limited and bounded within certain Precincts, beyond which they pretend not to exert it. They have a certain definite Number of Churches and their Presbyters, as the Charge they suppose committed to them.

Nor do any Diocesan Bishops pretend to be such unfixed Officers as the Evangelists were.

I know, indeed, 'tis pretended that the Apostles, before their Decease, did constitute such Bishops with a general Superintendency over the Churches and their Presbyters within such a certain District. And this Pretence is founded on the Supposition of the Apostle Paul's leaving Timothy Bishop of Ephesus, and of all the Proconsular Asia, and leaving Titus Bishop of Crete.

But this Pretence is so far from being founded on the Account given us in the holy Scriptures, that the contrary seems manifest from thence. That Timothy was no such fixed Bishop as is pretended, will appear to any that from Scripture-History traces the Account of his Travels, of which this is a short Abstract. When Paul went from Beraa to Athens, he left Silas and Timothy behind him, Acts xvii. 14. Afterwards they coming to Paul at Athens, Paul sends Timothy to Thessalonica to confirm the Christians there, 1 Thess. iii. 2. Thence Timothy returns to Athens again, and Paul sent him and Silas thence into Macedonia, Acts xviii. 5. Afterwards they travel to Ephesus, and thence Paul sends Timothy again (with Erastus) into Macedonia, Acts xix. 22. And Paul himself went thither after them, Acts xx. 1. From

Macedonia they, with divers Brethren, journey'd to Asia, Acts xx. 4. and came to Miletus, whence Paul sent for the Elders of the Church of Ephesus, and committed the Care of that Church to them, not to Timothy. On the contrary, Paul took Timothy with him in his Journey to Jerusalem, and so to Rome. For those Epistles which Paul wrote when Prisoner there, do mention Timothy as his Companion. As that to the Ephesians, Colossians, Hebrews, and Philemon. And for Paul's beseeching Timothy in his first Epistle, to abide still at Ephesus, 1 Tim. i. 3. when he went into Macedonia, 'tis so far from being any Proof of his having fix'd him as the Bishop of that Church in the modern Sense, that 'tis a solid Argument to the contrary: For he must have a very ill Opinion of Timothy's Fidelity and Care, had he plac'd him as a fix'd Bishop for term of Life there, if he thought him to need any such earnest Entreaty to abide in a Place that was his sole Charge and Care. And by the Account I have already given it appears, that the Apostle very soon remov'd him from thence: Nor is there any Evidence in Scripture of his ever returning thither.

That Titus was no such fix'd Bishop of Crete is as manifest from the scriptural Account of his Travels. He was Paul's Companion in his Journey to Jerusalem, Gal. ii. 1. Paul returning to Antioch, pass'd thro' Syria and Cilicia, confirming the Churches, Acts xv. 41. From Cilicia he pass'd to Crete. Having there preach'd the Gospel, and planted Churches, he left Titus for a while, to set in order the Things that were wanting, or left undone, &c. Tit. i. 5. Paul the very next Year desires him to come to him to Nicopolis, where he intended to winter, Tit. iii. 12. But changing his Purpose, he sends for him to Ephesus, where his Winter-station was, thence he sent him to Corinth, to enquire of the State of that Church. His Return from thence Paul expected at Troas; and because his Expectation was not answer'd, was griev'd in Spirit, 2 Cor. ii. 13. Thence Paul pass'd into Macedonia, where Titus met him, and brought him glad Tidings what gracious Effects his Epistle to the Corinthians had produc'd, 2 Cor. vii. 6, 7. Paul having collected the Liberality of the Saints, sends Titus again to the Corinthians, to prepare them for that Contribution, 2 Cor. viii. 6. After this we read, that Titus was with Paul at Rome, and went thence, not to Crete (his supposed Diocese) but unto Dalmatia, 2 Tim. iv. 10. And 'tis observable, the most of these Travels were after his being left in Crete; and we never read of his ever returning thither; and all agree that he staid but one Year there.

This Evidence is so clear, that it has extorted this ingenuous Confession from a late learned Commentator, "That if by saying Timothy and Titus were Bishops, the one of Ephesus, and the other of Crete, we understand that they took upon them those Churches or Dioceses, as their fixed Charge and Care, in which they were to preside for term of Life, he believes that Timothy and Titus were not thus Bishops". See Dr. Whitby's Preface to his Comment on Titus.

3. There is no Evidence in the Holy Scriptures of the Apostle's having left any Officers superior to those scriptural Bishops I have describ'd, entrusted with the sole Power of Church-Government over some Scores or Hundreds of particular Churches, and with the sole Power of Ordination within that Compass and District.

For such a sole Power of Church-Government and Ordination, neither the Apostles nor Evangelists ever claimed or exercis'd themselves, much less did they delegate it to any others as their Successors therein.

The Apostles were so far from claiming the sole Power of Church-Government themselves over the Churches they planted, that they left the Elders or Bishops they constituted there, entrusted with it. Thus when the Apostle Paul at Miletus, sent for the Elders of the Church of Ephesus, he was so far from debarring them from the Government of it, and reserving it to himself, or to Timothy, or any other superior Officer, that he charges them with the Exercise of it as their important Duty,

and requires them to feed (i. e. to rule) the Church of God over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers. And there are two Circumstances of his Charge very remarkable. The one is, that it was his last Charge to them, when he tells them, He should see their Faces no more: So that if the Apostle had either claim'd the sole Government of that Church, or design'd to entrust any other Superior with it after his Decease, this was the proper Season of doing it. Nay, if Timothy was at this Time with him (as 'tis every way reasonable to believe by the foremention'd Account of his Travels that he was) nothing can be more unaccountable, if he design'd to leave him entrusted with this sole Government, than that he should not take the least Notice of him, nor once require those Elders to be subject to his Authority and Jurisdiction. The other Circumstance is, that the Apostle gives them this Charge upon the Prospect of their Dangers from Seducers and Dividers, and therefore supposes their Government and Inspection over this Flock the best Remedy against Schism. See Acts xx. 29, 30.

And had the Apostle design'd to leave such Diocesan Bishops with such a sole Jurisdiction over many Churches, 'tis most unaccountable that he should never in his Epistles to Timothy or Titus describe their Office and the Extent of it, and mention their distinctive Characters, but confound them with their Elders that are suppos'd to be their Subjects, and a Part of their Charge.

And that the Apostle design'd not to subject these Elders of Ephesus to the sole Government of Timothy, as a Part of his Charge, may be justly infer'd from his Charge to them, in which he exhorts them to take heed to themselves (or to one another, *ἑαυτοῖς*) as well as to the Flock of God, over which the Holy Ghost had made them Overseers (or Bishops). So that they were here required to exercise a mutual Inspection over each other's Behaviour and Conduct, that by fraternal Admonitions they might excite each other to fulfill the Ministry they had receiv'd from their common Lord, and might manage the common Affairs of the Flock committed to them, as much as possible, with common Consent and Concord. But sure there could be no Ground for such a Charge as this both relating to themselves, and to their Flock, if they were intended for no higher Honour than merely to be another's Curates and Deputies, by whom they were only entrusted with the Care of teaching that Flock, and celebrating divine Worship among them, while the sole Government both over them and their Flock, was entirely reserv'd to a superior Officer, to whose Authority they were both to be perpetually subjected.

And for the Apostle Peter, he was so far from claiming such a sole Jurisdiction over all the Churches he planted, or committing it to others, that he recommends the Government and Inspection of them to those Elders that were set over them, requiring them to feed the Flock of God among them, 1 Pet. v. 2, 3, &c.

Nor did the Apostles either claim to themselves, or delegate to others, the sole Power of Ordination, to the excluding these scriptural Elders or Bishops from it. On the contrary, the Presbytery, either alone, or in concurrence with the Apostle Paul, laid their Hands on Timothy. And the Teachers joyned with the Prophets of Antioch, in laying theirs on Barnabas and Saul, when sent on that special Service of preaching to the Gentiles.

And if the Apostles themselves claim'd no such sole Power of Government or Ordination, with respect to the Churches they planted, nor delegated any such sole Power to the Evangelists, or to any other fixed Officers, we are sure no others can claim it, nor have scriptural Bishops any reason to abandon those Rights that belong to their Office, as Ministers of Christ, and Inspectors of their particular Flocks, in compliance with any such unscriptural Claim. And there is the more Reason for their refusing Subjection to such a Claim, when the engrossing the sole Power of Church-Government over many Churches into one Hand, does unavoidably occasion the woful Corruption of all true Discipline. For if the Pastor

for of one numerous Congregation, how great soever his Abilities are, do find the Exercise of such Discipline towards the Members of it, so difficult and laborious a Task, as will take up all the Time and Thoughts he can spare from his other Labours, (and I am confident, all that have seriously try'd it, will tell you this is really the Case) How shall we think one Man capable of doing that for some Scores or Hundreds of Churches, which the most judicious and laborious Pastor finds it hard enough to do for one? And those seem little to know or consider, what it is, that pretend to it.

I know indeed, that some Superiority of a Bishop over Presbyters begun early after the Apostles Days, and did universally diffuse it self thro' the Christian Church. But 'tis a great Mistake to think that it was always the same that is now claim'd.

Bishops, as distinguish'd from Presbyters, were for some time no more than the senior Pastors of a single Congregation, that claim'd only a Primacy of Order in the Council of Presbyters, by whose common Advice all Church Affairs were manag'd. The Bishops of the Churches planted in great Cities, first begun to extend their Authority over those lesser Assemblies which the Increase of Converts occasion'd the Erection of, as so many Chapels of Ease under the Bishops Church, as the Mother Church: So that our large Parish Towns, with the Chapels of Ease belonging to them, seem a true Emblem of their small Dioceses. But when the Advancement of Constantine to the Imperial Power, increas'd the Wealth and Dignity of such City Bishops, and the Ecclesiastical Government came to be cast into the same Model with the Civil; especially when so many Causes were referr'd to the Arbitration of such Bishops, their Authority swell'd to a greater Extent; their Dioceses were gradually enlarged; nay, the Dignity of the Cities where they were plac'd, gave some of them a Pre-eminence above others, as Metropolitans above Provincial Bishops, and Patriarchs above them. Upon the Division of the Empire, the Bishop of Constantinople claim'd the next Place to that of Rome, (which had so long been the Imperial City). And this gave the Rise to the Papal Claim of universal Supremacy. But even this Superiority of Bishops above Presbyters, was never generally esteem'd as a Superiority of Order and Office, and was ascrib'd to no higher Original than human Constitution, by Jerom, Austin, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Sedulius, Primatius, Ambrose, &c. not to mention elder Writers.

And what ever might be said to justify the Lawfulness of such an human Constitution, if Diocesan Bishops did claim no other Superintendency and Care over the several Churches in their Dioceses, and over their Elders and Bishops, than the Apostles and Evangelists did actually exercise; and if they left these scriptural Bishops in the Possession of that Power of governing their own Flocks which the Apostles themselves invest'd them in; I say, whatever might be said from the Practice of the Apostles and Evangelists to justify the Lawfulness of such an human Constitution, yet that Plea can never oblige us to submit to such a Diocesan Prelacy, as turns all the Churches of a Diocese into one govern'd Church, and by engrossing all Exercise of Discipline into one Hand, in so large a Precinct, both deprives scriptural Bishops of an essential Branch of their Pastoral Authority, and thereby also renders true Church Discipline an impracticable Thing, (not to mention the woful Corruption of it in the Courts that are now entrusted with the Management of it). Nor can we submit to that Claim of a sole Power of Ordination, which deprives scriptural Bishops of their Right, especially our Non-submission to it is the more excusable, when such Terms of Ministerial Communion are impos'd, as would exclude many from that sacred Office that are eminently qualify'd for it. Nay, when the Acknowledgment of Bishops, as a distinct Order from Priests and Deacons, is one of the Terms of Ministerial Communion; and that in such Expressions, as represent this to be evident from the Scrip-

tures themselves, from which I have now endeavour'd (and I hope not without satisfying Evidence) to prove the contrary.

But for such a Superiority of Diocesan Bishops as will leave true scriptural Bishops in the Possession of their undoubted Rights, and in the Exercise of that Power with which the Apostles themselves vested them, it appears how far those Non-conforming Ministers were willing for Peace sake to yield to it, who at the Treaty at the Savoy offer'd Archbishop Usher's own Model of the Reduction of Episcopacy, as the Ground-work for an Accommodation of our Differences in this Point. And for those whom no less will satisfy than the sole Power of Government and Ordination over so many Churches as a Diocese usually consists of, we think our selves very excusable, that we dare not put down the necessary Government of so many true scriptural Bishops, to advance the unnecessary Grandure of one unscriptural One. And we have the more Reason to reject this Claim of a sole Power of Government over so many Churches, and a sole Power of Ordination, when so many of those who of late plead for it, carry the Matter so high, as to declare the Ministry of all the Reformed Churches that want the Authority and Ordination of such Diocesans, as Null and Void, and all the Sacraments administered by the Pastors of such Churches invalid; and tell us, Their Flocks are left to the uncovenanted Mercy of God. These Principles are not only void of Truth, but of Charity, and the Refutation of them is highly necessary to lay the Foundation of an happy Concord among the Reformed Churches.

Having thus consider'd what the Office of a Bishop is, I now proceed,

II. To shew, that 'tis a good (or excellent) Work.

And here,

First, We must consider it as a Work that requires the most laborious Diligence in the Performance of it.

A Christian Bishop must be no Loiterer, but a painful Labourer in the Vineyard of the Lord. And accordingly his Employment is compar'd to those that require the greatest Industry and Care. He is an Husbandman, that must with incessant Toyl sow the heavenly Seed, and cultivate that Field of the Church, which is God's Husbandry. He is a Builder, that must, with unwearied Pains, both lay the Foundation of many a spiritual Temple to God, and carry on the Superstructure. He is a Leader in the Army of Christ, [*ἡγούμενος*] who must be continually at Prizes with the Enemies of his Kingdom, who must endure all the Hardships and Difficulties of that holy Warfare, and must endeavour with all Vigilance and Care, both to save himself, and them that hear him, 1 Tim. iv. ult.

And truly when we consider, how great and extensive, how difficult and laborious our Work is, we may soon perceive, 'tis enough, not only to take up all our Thoughts and Time, but to require the utmost Intenseness and Application of all our Powers. A Christian Bishop has much to do in his own Closet, and his secret Retirements; partly by Reading and Meditation to lay in and increase such a Stock of divine Knowledge, as may enrich his Mind, and enable him as a ready Scribe for the Kingdom of Heaven, to bring forth out of his Treasure Things new and old, and those suited to the various Cases and Emergencies of his People. And I need not tell you (my Brethren) what a vast and boundless Field Divinity in its due Extent is, to those that wou'd be thoroughly skill'd in the Word of Righteousness, and able Workmen, that need not be asham'd, capable to divide aright the Word of Truth, and give every one their Portion in its due Season. Partly also, that he may by serious and deep Premeditation come duly prepar'd for all those publick Solemnities, in which he must be the Mouth of his People to God, or the Mouth of God to them: For the Preacher should (as the Wise-man speaks) seek to find out acceptable Words, Eccl. xii. 10. Not such as will tickle the Ears of his People with empty Strains of frothy Wit, but Words of Authority and Weight,

Weight, of Warmth and Fervour, proper to pierce the Consciences of his Hearers, and to excite and raise their devout Affections. A Christian Bishop must be often in his Pulpit, dispensing all the Institutions of Christ to his Flock, preaching the Word in Season and out of Season. He must give himself to the Word and Prayer. And as all his Ministrations must be the Product of serious Preparation, so they must be perform'd with that Accuracy and Judgment, that Vigour and Zeal, that Life and Fervour of true Devotion, that may make and leave deep Impressions on the Hearts of all that attend them. A Christian Bishop must be often with his People, that he may be well acquainted with the State of their Souls, and may apply himself to every one with suitable Admonitions and Counsels. And here to visit the Sick, and farther them in their Preparations for a near Eternity, to warn the Secure, to admonish the Careless, to comfort the Sorrowful and Dejected, to encourage the Serious, to resolve the Doubting, to recover the Back-sliding, to compose Differences among contending Parties, is a Work that few understand the Difficulty and the Toyl of, but those that have try'd it. And to manage all these several Duties aright, will require that Sagacity and Prudence, that Humility and Meekness, that Patience and Self-denial, which greatly increase the Difficulty of the Work. Nay, a Christian Bishop must be often with his Brethren, that by joyning his Counsels and Endeavours with theirs, he may be serviceable to promote the common Concerns of Religion, and the valuable Interests of Truth and Holiness, of Concord and Love. But above all, a Christian Bishop must converse much with God, and with his own Soul, that he may excite those Graces that should animate and run thro' all his holy Ministrations, that he may perform every Part of his Pastoral Duty with a single Regard to the Glory of God, and that Fidelity and Tenderness to the Souls of Men, that may commend him to the All-seeing Eye of God, and as far as possible to the Consciences of Men. And O what vigilant Inspection over our own Hearts, and constant Attention to the inward Motions thereof, will all this require?

And sure, my Brethren, the great Importance and Moment of our Work calls for all this unwearied Industry. For we must not do the Work of the Lord negligently. The Vigour of our Souls, and Strength of our Bodies must be spent in it. It must be done with all our Might. And those are little acquainted with this sacred Office, that do not take it for a most laborious Work, or propose to themselves a Life of sensual Ease and Sloth in the Discharge of it. But,

Secondly, We must consider it as a good Work, [*καλὸν ἔργον.*]

And when the Apostle calls it a good Work, or an excellent One, he seems to intimate, both the Beneficialness of it to others, and its being honourable to those that discharge it aright.

1. 'Tis a good (or excellent) Work, as that implies its being highly beneficial to others.

And truly if we may measure the Goodness of any Work by its Conduciveness to the Glory of God and the Good of others, I know none comparable to this. Who can be employ'd in the Prosecution of more valuable and useful Designs than a faithful Minister of Christ is? He carries on no lower Aims than the Advancing the Honour of God in the Salvation of precious immortal Souls. What is a Christian Bishop's Work, but to diffuse saving Light to miserable Souls that sit in the Region and Shadow of Death? To quicken those to spiritual Life that are now dead in Trespasses and Sins? To bring those into a blessed Union to the Son of God, who are now without Christ, and consequently without Hope in the World? To persuade those to accept of his offer'd Salvation that infinitely need it, and to form him in those Hearts in which the Body of Sin reign'd before? To reconcile those to the Nature and Laws of God, who are now possess'd with wretched Enmity against him, and to recover his amiable Image where

'tis now defac'd? To beget those to a living Hope of the incorruptible heavenly Inheritance, who are now Strangers to the Covenants of Promise? To carry on sincere Converts to higher Degrees of divine Knowledge, and to more eminent Attainments in Grace and Holiness? To recover declining Souls from their spiritual Back-slidings and Decays? To arm and fortify endanger'd Souls against the Assaults of the Tempter, and the Violence and Force of his Temptations? To assist and encourage the faithful Soldiers of Christ in their spiritual Warfare, in order to their happy Conquest over all their spiritual Enemies? In a Word, to promote their Fruitfulness in every good Word and Work here, and to train them up for the Perfection and Glory of the heavenly State, when Christ will present to himself a glorious Church without Spot or Wrinkle, holy and unblemish'd, Eph. v. 27. And, my Brethren, can any Design be more serviceable to the Advancement of the Kingdom and Glory of God, or more compassionate and more beneficial to the Souls of Men than this? How truly may it be said of a laborious Christian Bishop, as it was once said of the great Bishop of Souls, that he goes about doing good? Acts x. 38. Who can possibly be employ'd in more excellent Service than this? Who can be instrumental in promoting more Godlike Designs? Who can expect to see more happy Fruit of their Labours? If the Salvation of one Soul be worth all the Labour of a Man's Life, how much more is it so to be the successful Instrument of adding many to the Church of Christ of such as shall be finally sav'd! Besides, a true Christian Bishop is serviceable to maintain the Honour of Religion, by the faithful Exercise of sacred Discipline, and to provide for the Continuance and Propagation of it to succeeding Ages, by setting others apart for the same Office. But,

2. 'Tis a good (or excellent) Work, as that implies its being honourable to themselves.

'Tis a commendable Work that renders those that are faithful and diligent in it, truly amiable and worthy of Esteem. And no wonder when 'tis (as I have shewn) so highly useful and beneficial. And accordingly, the Holy Scriptures dignify a Christian Bishop with those Titles that bespeak the Dignity of his Office. He is an Ambassador of Christ, sent on the most honourable Embassy of Reconciliation and Peace; and we know that all Ambassadors are to be treated with a Respect suitable to the Greatness of the Prince whom they represent. They are Stewards in the House of God, and we know what an honourable Post that is in the Courts of earthly Potentates. They are Ministers and Servants of the most high God, whose special Relation to him and Nearness of Access, does render their Character sacred and venerable. They are Angels of the Churches, whose Time is divided between those two excellent Works, the beholding the Face of their Father in Heaven, and the ministering to the Heirs of Salvation here below. They are Stars in the Right-Hand of Christ; who therefore shine with a bright Lustre in that more elevated Orb in which he has plac'd them: They are Buttresses and Pillars in the House of God; and therefore ornamental as well as useful to that sacred Building. Their Employment is truly noble, and such as Holy Angels themselves would think it no Dishonour to be engag'd in, who reckon themselves the Prophets Fellow-Servants, Rev. xxii. 9. We are indeed but earthen Vessels; but 'tis a precious Treasure that is lodg'd and deposited in us, and which renders us Vessels of Honour in the House of God. 'Tis indeed a Dignity that the best of us have reason with the Apostle to account our selves unworthy of, and to admire the Condescension and Grace of God, in committing so excellent a Ministry to us. And as our Work it self is honourable, so the Reward of it will be eminently glorious. If we now turn many to Righteousness, we shall e'er long shine as Stars in the Firmament above, even as Stars of the first Magnitude there, Dan. xii. 1. The Reward of a Prophet is represented as exceeding great, and far beyond that of a righteous Man (meerly consider'd as such) Matt. x. 41, 42. 'Tis a bright and

unfading

unfading Crown of Glory, which the chief Shepherd shall at his coming place on the Head of all those inferior Pastors that have faithfully fed the Flock of God among them, 1 Pet. v. 4.

Thus you see that the Office of a Bishop is an excellent Work, both as that it implies its being highly beneficial to others, and truly honourable to himself.

It now remains,

Lastly, That I make some Reflections on the foregoing Discourse, by way of practical Application.

Does he that desires the Office of a Bishop, desire a good Work? Then,

I would hence apply my self to such as are entering upon, or actually invested in it.

I. For such as are entering upon it, they may hence see, with what Sincerity of Intentions they should aspire to this sacred Office.

Alas! If either secular Pomp or Grandure, or great Revenues and Wealth, or human Applause, or any such low Considerations as these, be the chief Motives we have in our Eye; 'tis not the Office of a Bishop that we aspire unto; our Ambition is but carnal and irregular. If therefore we would seek it with a commendable Ambition, we must take a right View of it; we must consider it as a painful and difficult Work, wherein we must renounce our carnal Ease, and spend our Strength and Life in continual Labours and Cares. We must expect manifold Difficulties and Discouragements in it, and come to it with a considerable Stock of holy Resolution and Courage, Patience and Self-denial. 'Tis therefore an ardent Desire of Advancing the Kingdom and Glory of God; 'tis a vehement Thirst for the Salvation of precious Souls; 'tis a fervent Love to the great Saviour and Lover of Souls, that must be the Springs of our Ambition. And 'tis the Applause and Praise of God we must aspire unto, 'tis his glorious Rewards we must have in our Eye. And if we are indeed influenced by such Considerations as these, then is our Ambition regular and commendable. Then are our Desires of this holy Function (supposing we are duly qualify'd for it, and call'd to it) such as God will graciously accept. Then may we expect his Favour and Countenance, his Presence and Assistance in that excellent Work, when so excellent Motives as these incline us to engage in it.

II. For those of us that are vested in this Office, here is something suggested to excite us to our Duty, and something to encourage us in it.

1. Here is something suggested to excite us to our Duty.

'Tis a Work we are engaged in, that calls for our utmost Diligence and Care.

And truly, my Brethren, when we view our Work in the vast Extent of it; when we consider that Variety of Duties we owe to the Flocks committed to our Care; when we consider our own manifold Infirmities of Body and Mind; when we ponder the great Importance and Moment of our Work, and the greater Consequences and Issues that depend upon it; when we think, what it is to watch over precious Souls, as those that must give an Account of them, O what Reason have we to cry out with the blessed Apostle Paul, Who is sufficient for these Things? What Need have we to implore divine Assistance and Strength with the most ardent Prayers, as sensible that all our Sufficiency is of God? And with what Intenseness of Mind, with what Vigour of Affection should we apply our selves to the Discharge of our Office? With how unwearied Endeavours should we prosecute the great and important Ends of it? We should spare no Pains, no Vigilance and Care, that we may fulfill the Ministry we have receiv'd of the Lord, and may approve our Fidelity to his Eye. We have need to bestir our selves, when our Work is so great, and our Time is so short, and our Account is so certain and near. 'Tis no easy Matter so to feed the Flock of God, as to keep our selves pure from the Blood of all under our Inspection and Care. We have Work enough for all our Powers, for our Heads and our Hearts, for our Strength and our Time; we have the Salvation of others

to work out, as well as our own; and indeed cannot expect to save our selves, if we do little considerable towards the saving of them. O let us then dread to be found Lovers in the Vineyard of the Lord. Let us not mistake our Bishoprick for a sine cure. Let us reckon our selves sent to labour in that Vineyard, in which the greater Harvest of Souls we bring in, our Account will be so much the more comfortable.

To that End, let us consider,

'Tis this holy Diligence in the Duties of our Pastoral Office, that we have solemnly promis'd and vow'd at our Ordination to it. To this special Service of our Lord we have devoted our Life and our Time, our Abilities and Gifts, our Strength and Vigour. And we cannot fail of this Industry without being false to our sacred Engagements.

'Tis the Work of God, and therefore calls for our utmost Industry. 'Tis that Work wherein we are Co-workers with him. 'Tis the great Designs of our blessed Saviour that we are called to carry on. 'Tis the Interests of his Kingdom we are concern'd to advance. 'Tis his beloved Flock we are to feed. 'Tis the Salvation of those Souls that he has purchas'd with his own Blood that we are to pray and study and labour for.

And the Eye of the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls is continually upon us. He observes our Negligence or Industry, our Indifferency or our Zeal, in all the Duties of our holy Function. He will measure the Sincerity of all that Love we profess to him by our affectionate Care in feeding his Sheep and his Lambs, John xxi. 15, &c. To him we must be accountable for the Souls committed to our Charge; and at our Hands will their Blood be required, if they perish thro' our treacherous Neglect. And the Blood of neglected Souls is the Blood of the deepest Dye. Whereas he observes, and will accept and reward our holy Diligence, whatever our Success may be. And happy will those Servants be, whom our Lord when he comes shall find so doing, Luke xii. 43.

2. Here is something suggested to encourage all faithful Bishops or Pastors in the Execution of their Office.

'Tis a good Work we are employ'd in, highly beneficial to others, and honourable to our selves. We must (my Brethren) expect manifold Discouragements in the Discharge of our Office, and accordingly fortify and fore-arm our selves against them. And here we have Considerations every way capable to outweigh them. 'Tis true indeed, our Work will be painful and laborious. But we cannot spend our Life and Strength in more excellent Service than this. 'Tis Work whose beneficial Tendency should render it highly pleasing and delightful. We may look back upon our Fidelity and Diligence, and especially upon our prosperous Success in it with unspeakable Satisfaction. Our own Unsuccessfulness is indeed our greatest Discouragement. But when God makes us the happy Instruments of bringing home many Souls to him, when we can discern numerous Converts that we may hope will appear to be our Crown and Joy at the great Day of our Lord's coming? How will this animate us in our Work? How will it sweeten the Remembrance of all our Toils and Cares? How will it make amends for all our Hardships and Trials? This is a Work that we shall never have any Temptation to repent of, unless it be that we have been too negligent in it.

And whereas, our Profession may appear contemptible in the Eyes of the Men of this World, and may expose us to their Flouts and Scorn; we have enough here to ballance that slight Temptation. Our Work is excellent and honourable in God's Account. Our Fidelity and Diligence in it will entitle us to his Approbation and Praise. Nay, our Office will recommend us to the Esteem and Veneration of all wise and good Men. And sure God's Applause and theirs (who alone are fit Judges of true Worth and Honour) will infinitely counter-vail the Contempt wherewith blinded Worldlings, or prophane and atheistical Scoffers may treat our sacred Function. No wonder that they despise us, who undervalue their

their own Souls, and make light of Heaven and Salvation! No wonder that they who slight the Son of God himself, should slight his *Embassadors* that come in his Name. But,

II. I would hence apply my self to those of you that are under the Inspection and Care of such *scriptural Bishops*.

And to such I would only from hence recommend these two Duties.

1. *Esteem such highly, for the sake of that good Work they are employ'd in.*

Beware of the common Guilt of this irreligious Age, viz. The treating this holy Profession with Contempt. Nothing can be a greater Argument of *Prophaneness* than this. 'Tis a manifest Affront offer'd to the blessed God, to despise those that serve at his Altar. Indignities offer'd to *Embassadors*, do always reflect on the Prince that employs them, and are accordingly resented as if offer'd to himself. And so our Lord tells us, are the *Indignities* offer'd to his *Messengers*. Those are awful Words, and deserve the serious Consideration of such irreligious Persons, *he that despises you (saith our Lord, Luke x. 16.) despises me, and he that despises me, despises him that sent me.* To think that being the Overseer and Guide of a Christian Flock lessens a Man's Character, and is sufficient to represent him as *despicable*, is only to betray your own stupid Ignorance of what is truly excellent and honourable. 'Tis to estimate the Value of Things by Sense, and not by divine Faith; and to judge of the Respect due to Persons, rather by the empty Figure they make in this World, than by that which they are like to make before God, Angels, and Men, in the World to come.

But, my Brethren, I hope better Things of you. And 'tis from you we expect other Treatment and Usage. And indeed, the Relation between a Christian Bishop and his Flock ought to be mutually endearing. If we are truly what our Office obliges us to, we can say in Sincerity, *That we long for you all in the Bowels of Christ, that we travel in Birth over you till Christ be formed in you; that we are willing to impart unto you, not only the Gospel of God, but even our own Souls also.* And sure we may justly claim some reciprocal Affection on your Part. Our incessant Labours and Cares may challenge some share in your Esteem and Love. And 'tis indeed highly requisite to the Success of our Labours. 'Tis our Interest in your Affections and Veneration that must give all our Instructions and Counsels, our Admonitions and Reproofs their just Weight and Authority with you. Even a young Timothy must not be despised on that Account, 1 Tim. iv. 12. Nay, your Regard to the Dignity of our Office must both render you tender of the just Reputation of faithful Ministers, and ready to overlook those common Infirmities and Frailties, which they, being Men of like Passions with others, are subject to. You must value the heavenly Treasure tho' it be but in Earthen Vessels. You must be ready to cover their involuntary lamented Failures with a Mantle of Love,

as considering that they are not Angels, but Men. But their Office it self should be truly venerable in your Eye. And their conscientious Fidelity and Diligence therein does justly entitle them to the affectionate Respect of all those for whose Souls they watch with so tender and laborious a Care.

2. *Contribute your best Endeavours to the Success of that good Work that your Christian Bishops are employ'd in.*

And truly, my Brethren, this is the best Encouragement you can give us. Did you bring a teachable Mind to our holy Instructions, and an obedient tractable Heart to our Persuasions and Counsels? Could we see the Work of God prospering in our Hands, and carry'd on with Success in your Hearts, O how wou'd it revive and animate us in all our holy Ministrations! Could we see many Souls returning to the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls? Could we behold many made a willing People to Christ in the Day of his Power, and Converts as numerous as the Drops of Dew from the Womb of the Morning? Could we observe you entertaining the Word of God with Reverence and Affection, attending on all his Institutions with Diligence and ardent Devotion? Could we behold our Churches walking in the Fear of the Lord, and thereby edify'd and multiply'd? Could we discern greater Success and Fruit of our Labours in feeding the Sheep, and even the Lambs of Christ; O how would this strengthen our Hands, and encourage our Hearts in our excellent Work! And to excite you hereto,

Consider, That 'tis your own eternal Interest and Salvation that all our Labours are bent to promote. And when others are so solicitous to farther your Salvation, will you be careless and negligent of your own?

Nay, consider, that as we are accountable for our Diligence in our Office, so will you for the spiritual Advantages you enjoy under our Pastoral Inspection and Conduct. And if you perish, notwithstanding all our Fidelity, your Blood will be required at your own Hands. O do not then force us to give up our Account of any of you with Sighs and Groans for the Unsuccessfulness of our Labours, instead of Joy and Triumph in the happy Fruits of them. See Heb. xiii. 17.

I shall only add, that you should farther the excellent Work we are employ'd in, by giving all needful Encouragement thereto according to your Ability. And you have a remarkable Promise to excite you to it, deliver'd by our Lord himself, *that he who receives (or entertains) a Prophet in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward, i. e. He that has contributed to the Encouragement and Success of his Labours, shall share in the Recompenſe of them.*

Now, May the God of Peace that brought again from the Dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, thro' the Blood of the everlasting Covenant, make you perfect in every good Work to do his Will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his Sight, thro' Jesus Christ; To whom be Glory for ever and ever. Amen. Heb. xiii. 20, 21.

A N

A P P E N D I X

To the foregoing

S E R M O N.

SINCE the Printing this *Discourse*, concerning the Office of a *Scriptural Bishop*, I occasionally cast my Eye on some late *Pamphlets*, publish'd under the Title of *Censura Temporum*. The Author pretends to consider impartially, the good or ill *Tendency* of Books, Sermons, &c. But 'tis easy to foresee what kind of *Impartiality* is to be expected from him: As to Books that relate to our *Civil Constitution*, he recommends to us not only *Dr. Hickes's Jovian*, which so plainly countenances all the arbitrary Proceedings of the late Reigns, but *Mr. Leslie's Cassandra*, that is directly levell'd against the late *Revolution*, (which he expressly makes to be the same Thing with *Rebellion*;) and consequently against the present Government that is establish'd thereon. And therefore I the less wonder'd, that in reference to our *Ecclesiastical Constitution*, he should celebrate those late Authors who have not only asserted the *divine Right* of *Diocesan Episcopacy*, but have confin'd the *Catholick Church* within the Bounds of what they call the *Episcopal Communion*. How different these Sentiments are from those of our first Reformers in King Henry the Eighth, King Edward the Sixth, and Queen Elizabeth's Reign, *Mr. Humphreys* has sufficiently prov'd in his *Healing Attempt*, (wrote in Defence of Archbishop *Usher's Reduction of Episcopacy*). How little Foundation they have in the Holy Scriptures, I have shown in the foregoing *Discourse*. And since in his *Remarks* on the Book of a late Author, entituled, *The divine Right of Episcopacy Asserted*, &c. (prefac'd by *Dr. Hickes*) he has given us the Strength of two Arguments: he insists on from the *New Testament* to prove his Assertion, and seems to think them *unanswerable*; I thought it not improper to consider them in order to the Confirmation of what I have offer'd in this *Discourse* to prove, That a *Scriptural Bishop* and *Elder* are the same in Office as well as Name.

His first Argument, from *Acts* xx. 28. runs thus. "Either those *Elders* of the Church (*viz.* of *Ephesus*) which *St. Paul* summon'd, were properly *Bishops*; and then the *divine Right* of *Episcopacy* is plain and evident in Scripture; and we gain this over and above, that the *Metropolitcal Power* too was of Apostolical Appointment. For if those *Elders* of the Church were *Bishops*, *Timothy* by that Power *St. Paul* requires him to exercise over them, could have been no less than their *Metropolitan*. But if they were only *Priests*, then that superior Character and Jurisdiction that *Timothy* was invested with, and commanded to make a good Use of, could be no less than *Episcopal*.

To the former Part of this *Dilemma*, I would suggest the following Particulars, by way of Answer.

1. That the *Elders* summon'd by *St. Paul* were properly *Bishops*, according to the *scriptural* Notion of

them, (*viz.* Such as had one of the *Flocks of God* committed to their Oversight and Government) is evident from the Text it self. And the *divine Right* of such an *Episcopacy* is freely own'd. But that they were such as had each of them a great Number of *Flocks* or *Congregations* (together with their *Spiritual Guides*) making up one govern'd *Flock* or *Diocesan Church*, as the *Pastoral Charge* of each of them, there is not the least Reason to imagine; on the contrary, the Apostle supposes one *Flock*, (*viz.* The Church of *Ephesus*) to be the Object of their Joint-Overight and Care. Whereas had they been so many modern *Bishops*, he must have recommended to them the Feeding the several distinct *Flocks*, over which the Holy Ghost had made them so many distinct *Bishops* or *Overseers*. Whereas it was one *Flock* which they had a Joint-Relation to, which he requires them in common to feed, and to take heed to one another in the doing of it aright.

Besides, the Apostle's great Haste rendred it impossible to have so quickly summon'd so many *Diocesan Bishops* of *Asia*, unless we suppose the most of them at that very Time absent from their *Flocks*, and residing in *Ephesus*; and if it were so, the Apostle ought in all Reason to have given them a severe Rebuke for their thus leaving those *Flocks*, which they ought to have fed, and for their sauntering in another Man's District, where their Work did not lye.

2. From hence we may see, that the Dream of *Timothy's* being a *Metropolitan* has no Foundation.

These Authors seem to have very fruitful Imaginations, who can first turn the *Elders* of the Church of *Ephesus* into so many *Diocesans* of *Asia*, and then set *Timothy* as their *Metropolitan* at the Head of them. But sure, they little consult his Honour in making him their *Metropolitan*, because if he was possess'd of that high Dignity and Charge, he must himself have been as scandalous a *Non-Resident* as the rest; since by the Account I have given of his Travels, he so quickly left his *Metropolitan Church*, and never, that we read of, return'd to it again. And on this Supposition, the Apostle should have committed the Feeding and Governing this large *Metropolitan Church* to *Timothy*, not to the *Asian Bishops* that had only each of them a Part of it under their Care.

For the other Part of the *Dilemma*, *viz.* "That if the *Elders* of *Ephesus* were only *Priests*, then that superior Character and Jurisdiction *Timothy* was invested with, and commanded to make a good Use of over them, could be no less than *Episcopal*." I answer,

1. *Timothy's* superior Character was not that of a *Bishop*, (for then it had been common to him with these *Bishops* of *Ephesus*) but that of an *Evangelist*, whose Office it was to assist the Apostles in the Planting of Churches, the Constituting *Elders* and *Bishops* among them, (out of those Converts, whom they found

best qualify'd with Knowledge, and Abilities, and Piety for that Office, see 2 Tim. ii. 2.) and delivering to them the Rules that were necessary to their future Government. But when they had done this, they were far from claiming or engrossing for the future, the perpetual and sole Government of those Churches which they had once settled. They knew that they were not to stay long with them, but to remove to some other Parts of the World, where the Apostles needed their Assistance to plant and settle other Churches. And for them to have reserved to themselves the sole Government of those Churches which they must leave so soon, and perhaps usually without any Prospect of ever returning to them, would have been not only unreasonable, but wicked. For unless we could suppose them capable of exercising sacred Discipline at a Distance, (without any personal Knowledge of particular Cases and Circumstances) they must, by thus reserving all Church-Government to themselves, have rendered it impracticable, and destroyed the very Ends of that Power which they pretended to engross. Or at least, they should in their Absence have constituted some others as their Deputies, to exercise this *Diocesan Jurisdiction* in their Name.

2. We see on the contrary, that notwithstanding all the Authority of an Evangelist, which (the Author tells us) St. Paul had invested Timothy with, and commanded him to make a good Use of while he abode at Ephesus: This was so far from entitling him to the sole or perpetual Government of the Church of Ephesus, and of these Elders or Bishops thereof, that after their Settlement by Timothy, the Apostle does in his last Charge to them, when he expected to see them no more, commit the Flock of God among them, not to Timothy's Government, but to theirs. Nay, he does not leave the Elders themselves to Timothy's or any other single Persons perpetual Jurisdiction, but charges them to take heed to themselves, (or to one another). And consequently he leaves all Ecclesiastical Affairs to their own concordant Management. And this Evidence against Timothy's *Diocesan Authority*, is the more cogent, if we consider that Timothy was in all Probability present himself when the Apostle deliver'd this Charge to the Elders of Ephesus. And therefore the Apostle's entire Silence concerning Timothy's *Diocesan Jurisdiction*, and his leaving a Charge with these Elders so inconsistent with it, seems to me a clear Demonstration against it. Nay, I may add, that whatever general Superintendency over many particular Churches, can derive the least Countenance from what Timothy and Titus are supposed to have done as Evangelists at Ephesus and Crete, can yet never be extended to overturn and put down the Pastoral Government of the Elders or Bishops of particular Churches. Their Power must be supposed cumulative, but not destructive to that, as manifestly appears from this Instance before us.

3. I would by the way, take notice of that Expression in this Dilemma. If they (saith the Author, speaking of these Elders of Ephesus) were Priests, &c. If by Priests, the Author means Presbyters or Elders, 'tis granted that these Rulers of the Church of Ephesus were Elders, with respect to their Age or Authority, as well as Bishops with respect to their Work and Office. But if he take the Word Priests in the common Sense it bears, (and as it answers the Word *ἱερεὺς* in the New Testament) I understand not the Reason why this Author and those of his Sentiments, should be so fond of applying that Name to the Office of scriptural Elders or Bishops that is never once us'd there; especially when it carries so dangerous a Sound. 'Tis no wonder indeed, that the Romish Church should call those Priests, whom she supposes to be empower'd to offer up Christ daily in the Mass as a propitiatory Sacrifice. But what have we Protestants to do with that Name, who own no other propitiatory Sacrifice but what was offer'd once for all; nay, who own no other proper Priesthood but that of Christ, who is said to have *ἱερωσύνην ἀπαράλλατον*, a Priesthood that cannot pass from one to another, and so admits of no Successors in it. (See Heb. vii. 24.) If it be said, that scriptural Elders may be called Priests, on the Account of those spiritual Sacrifices of Prayer and Praise which they offer up, 'tis easily answer'd, that this Name is common to them with all other Christians; they are all Kings and Priests, Rev. i. 6. They all make up one Royal and Holy Priesthood, to offer up these spiritual Sacrifices, 1 Pet. ii. 5, 9. And therefore this Name can be no way proper to distinguish these scriptural Elders or Bishops, from the Flocks or Congregations that joyn with them in these spiritual Oblations. What peculiarly belongs to them is to be the Guides of those Assemblies in their publick Devotions. And I may here add, that that Title of the Clergy is as improperly chosen to distinguish these scriptural Elders or Ministers from those they call the Laity. For that Title is common to every Christian Church. Those Churches are God's, καὶ ἡμεῖς his Lots or Inheritances, 1 Pet. v. 3. And these scriptural Elders that are required to be their Overseers or Bishops, are not to act as Lords over them, but to be bright Exemplars to them. But this I only occasionally suggest, because misapplied Names do often help to confound the true Notions of Things.

The other scriptural Argument which the foremention'd Author cries up as an invincible Proof of the Settlement of an ordinary Episcopacy (he means a *Diocesan One*) in the Times of the Apostles, is drawn from "St. James's being consider'd by the Apostles while they were actually with him as Bishop of the whole Body of the Church of Jerusalem, to whom appertained the Throne of it, as Eusebius expresses it. Which shews us plainly, that Episcopacy was a distinguish'd Dignity in the Time of the Apostles, and that they yielded the Primacy to him, to whom the See of Jerusalem did belong. That one who was not of the Twelve, should have these Marks of extraordinary Respect paid him by the Twelve, or by as many of them as were there at that Time, which could be due to him only on the Score of a superior Dignity and Authority in the Place he then fill'd, is an uncontestable Evidence that he held that Dignity and Power by Virtue of an ordinary and settled Institution. For, certainly, the extraordinary Commission the Twelve had received, plac'd them in a Character otherwise equal to his, if not much superior. His Nearness of Blood to our blessed Saviour very justly entituled him to all the Expressions of a Deference personal and private. But that Relation neither invested him nor the Sons of Zebedee, nor the blessed Virgin herself, with any sort of Authority that should challenge those Recognitions he received from the Apostles themselves, as bearing a Character at that Time, and even in that Place superior to them. 'Tis true, the Eminence of his See might set him in that Respect above all ordinary Bishops whatsoever. But all the Brightness of that must have yielded to the Eminence of the Apostolical Character, if it had not been for the Jurisdiction that went along with it. His being the first Ordinary Bishop, wou'd by no means qualify him to take Place of any of the Extraordinary Ones. But being an Ordinary Bishop, might very well induce the Extraordinary Ones to treat him on that Occasion, and in that District, as superior to them. Hence it was at the End of the Consultation, when he closes with his decretory Speech, he speaks to the whole Assembly in such an authoritative Style, Men and Brethren, hearken unto me, Ver. 13. And wherefore my Sentence is, Ver. 9. And hence it was that St. Paul submitted himself to give an Account to St. James in Council (Acts xxi.) of the Success of his Ministry among the Gentiles, and that they laid that express Command upon him, Do therefore this that we say unto thee, &c. Ver. 23. And he so readily obey'd.

And the fore-cited Author is so elevated with the imaginary Force of this Argument, that he cannot forbear thus to insult upon it. "And now do not the unhappy Dividers upon the Principle of Parity, expect " St.

" St. Paul and the rest of the *Holy Apostles* should rise up in Judgment against, and condemn them for not submitting to the ordinary Government of the Church, when behold they that did constitute and frame it, submitted to it?"

I have in Justice to the *Author* re-cited this Argument at length; but shall content my self with a short Answer to it in the following Particulars.

Ans. 1. The whole Argument is founded on two meer precarious, nay, false Suppositions.

The one is, that St. James here mention'd in this, *Acts* xv. and xxi. was not one of the Twelve, nor an Apostle. Whereas if this was James the Son of Alphaeus, (as Grotius and other judicious Expositors think most probable) then he was one of the Twelve, mention'd *Matt.* x. 3. *Mark* iii. 18. And if this be the St. James here spoken of, the whole Argument founded on the contrary Conjecture falls to the Ground.

But if we grant the St. James here mention'd to have been the Brother of our Lord, tho' he was not one of the Twelve, it does not thence follow, that he had not both the Character and Authority of an Apostle. I am sure St. Paul reckon'd him among the Apostles, when he saith, *Gal.* i. 18, 19. Then after three Years I went up to Jerusalem, to see Peter, and abode with him fifteen Days, but other of the Apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's Brother. How comes then our Author to degrade St. James from his Apostolical Dignity to make a Diocesan Bishop of him? And how ridiculous is the Comparison he here makes on this Occasion between the Power of an Apostle, and that of an ordinary Bishop in his own Diocese? And would he have us take that for an invincible Proof, the Foundation of which is so palpable a Mistake?

But let us for once make a liberal Concession to the Author, and allow that the James here spoken of, was not one of the Twelve, nor had the Character of an Apostle at all. And then the Argument runs upon another Supposition far more precarious, viz. That the Apostles here paid an extraordinary Deference to him as Bishop of Jerusalem; That they yielded the Primacy to him; That they recognized his Character as in that Place superior to theirs; That they treated him as superior in his own District; That they submitted to his ordinary Government.

I have read over the whole Chapter with some Care, and to my great Disappointment, cannot find one Syllable of all this. All these Suppositions seem to have no other Foundation than that of a warm Imagination.

Our Author here sets up for a spiritual Clarendieux, to determine the grand Point of Precedency and Superiority between the Apostles and this imaginary Bishop of Jerusalem within the Bounds of his pretended Diocese. But when he comes to prove what he here supposes, all the Evidence he produces, amounts to no more than this; That St. James speaks last, that he begins his Speech with these Words, *Men and Brethren, hearken to me; and concludes them with these, Wherefore my Sentence is, &c.* This he calls Speaking in an authoritative Style. But I would gladly know what Evidence it is of a Man's assuming an Authority over such a Council as this, that he begins his Speech in the common Strain of all that crav'd Attention to what they had to say, even among such as they pretended no manner of Authority over? Does not St. Stephen thus begin his Speech to the Jewish Council? *Acts* vii. 2. St. Peter to the Jewish Multitude? *Acts* ii. 14. So St. Paul, *Acts* xxii. 1. Or what Evidence is it for a Man's assuming such an Authority and Jurisdiction for him in a Case that had been debated to conclude his Speech, *Wherefore I judge so or so; Or, Wherefore this is my Judgment.* For the Original is only *Διό ἐγὼ κρίνω.* As if St. James might not declare his own Judgment in the Case, without pretending to any Authority over the rest of the Elders, and much more without pretending to an Authority in that Place superior to that of the Apostles themselves? And I would gladly know, why any of

the Elders themselves, or even any of the Brethren (that joyn'd with the Apostles and Elders in that Council, and in the Letter they wrote as the Result of their Consultation) might not have deliver'd their Opinion in the same Language that St. James does his, without ever dreaming of any such Authority and Jurisdiction as this Author would found upon it? Might not any of them have bespoke the Attention of the rest with the same modest Preface, and after having offer'd so good Reasons, have told them, *it was his Judgment,* that the Case ought to be so determin'd. And had they done so, would it not have been ridiculous to draw such a Conclusion as this from it? Should the Author make such a Speech as a Member of the Convocation, would he not think those very unreasonable that would put such a perverse Construction upon it? Nay, what tho' the Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren agreed to make use of several of St. James's Expressions, in the Letter they wrote, will any more follow from it, than that they approved his Judgment, and the Reasons it was founded upon? And what can this signify, to prove that they recogniz'd in him an Authority superior to that of all the Elders, nay, (as the Author vainly fancies) superior in that District to the Apostolical Authority itself? Must every Member of a Synod or Council, whose Judgment is universally approv'd and follow'd, claim a Primacy and Government over all whose Suffrages accord with his? Nay, is there the least Shadow of Probability, that the Apostles, and Elders, and Brethren concurr'd with St. James, rather out of regard to his Superiority and Dignity, as the suppos'd Diocesan of that See, than out of regard to the convincing Reasons that he alleg'd? Of the former, there is not the least Intimation; the latter is fairly suggested in their Letter, *It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us, &c.* So that there needs no other Account to be given of their concurring with the Judgment of St. James, than their being convinc'd by the Reasons he offer'd.

But for our Author's peculiar Fancy, that the Apostles themselves recogniz'd St. James's Authority as in his District superior to theirs. I am afraid it will overturn all that Authority of Metropolitans, which he seems so desirous to countenance from the Example of Timothy. For I had always thought, that in our Archi-episcopal Visitations, the Authority of the Archbishop had, during his Visitation, suspended the Exercise of that of the Ordinary of the Place, as superior to it, and capable to controul it. But by this Author's Account, and Way of Reasoning, the Archi-episcopal must yield to the Episcopal Authority within the Bounds of the Bishop's Diocese; since he supposes, that the Apostles themselves, when in St. James's Diocese, yielded him the Primacy, recogniz'd his superior Authority, and submitted to his Government. And if this be not a Renversing all the pretended Order of the Hierarchy, I know not what is.

2. If there be any Force in this Author's Reasoning, it all turns against himself.

Paul and Barnabas are sent to Jerusalem, for the Decision of this Question (about the Necessity of the Gentiles being circumcis'd, and observing the Law of Moses, *Ver.* 2.) Upon their Arrival there, they are receiv'd of the Church, and of the Apostles and Elders, *Ver.* 4. The Apostles and Elders came together to consider of this Matter, *Ver.* 6. The Apostles, and Elders, and whole Church or Brethren, join in the Letter written to their Brethren in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia, *Ver.* 23. Now if St. James was of the Council, he was either one of the Apostles, or Elders, or Brethren. Our Author denies him to be one of the Twelve, or to be an Apostle at all. And to be sure he will not rank him among the Brethren. He then must either be one of the Elders, or else his Title and Dignity is quite left out, tho' the Author supposes his Authority to have chiefly decided the Question itself. And therefore should I argue at the Author's Rate, I might reason thus; That since St. James was one of the Elders, and yet since the Apostles themselves paid him such extraordinary Respect,

as to recognize him as *Superior* in his own District; therefore the *Authority* of *Presbyters* depends upon a settled Institution, since the *Apostles* themselves submitted to the ordinary Government of *Presbyters*, and will rise up in Judgment against such as refuse the like Submission to it: So that this is a much stronger Argument for *Presbyterial Government*, than for *Diocesan*. And thus far the Argument is strong and clear, that the *Apostles* themselves admitted the *Elders* of the Church of *Jerusalem*, to give their *Suffrages* in this Council; and if St. James was not an *Apostle*, then his *Vote* as an *Elder*, was in this important Affair as *decisive*, as that of any other Member of the Council.

I know, the Author will here tell us, that St. James was call'd the *Bishop of Jerusalem*, by *Writers* that lived in the succeeding Ages. But I must freely tell him, their Authority with me is no way comparable to that of St. Paul, who mentions him as one of the *Apostles* in the Place fore-cited, *Gal. i. 19*. Nor to that of St. Luke, who was better acquainted with St. James's Character and Station than they could be, and who here ranks him among either the *Apostles* or *Elders*, without the least mention of any *Dignity* or *Office* distinguish'd from those two. And indeed, if St. James had been invested with such a distinct Office, it would have been a very unaccountable Omission in the inspir'd Historian, to take no Notice of this bright Character, and eminent distinguish'd Dignity of his (to speak in the Author's Strain). If St. James was in the modern Sense the *Bishop of Jerusalem*, how come St. Luke to commit such a Blunder, as to confound the *Bishop* with those *Presbyters* that were his *Clergy* and *Subjects*? It seems to be with a Design to avoid this Absurdity, that Dr. Hammond makes these *Elders* to be so many *Diocesan Bishops* of *Judea*, St. James being their *Metropolitan*. But besides, that he makes St. Luke guilty of the same Fault, in dropping St. James's distinguishing Title of *Metropolitan*, he never considers the Absurdity of making all of them *Non-Residents*. For Paul and Barnabas found them all together at *Jerusalem*, without any *Summons* sent to bring them thither, or any *Jewish Festival* that should occasion their Congress. See Dr. Whitby's Paraphrase on *Acts xv*.

Besides, we may easily account for the antient Writers calling St. James *Bishop of Jerusalem*, because they suppos'd him constant *Præses*, or *Moderator* of the Council of *Presbyters* there. And tho' there is no Evidence of this in the Holy Scriptures, yet such a Concession will no way favour the *Diocesan Cause*. Such a stated Presidency for Order sake, in the (*Concessus Presbyterii*) Council of *Elders* in every Church was the *Episcopacy* that obtain'd, when the Characters of *Bishop* and *Elders* came first to be distinguish'd, (as we freely own they were in *Ignatius's* Time, if the *Epistles* ascrib'd to him be genuine). And a late learned Antiquary, Mr. Basnage, in his *History of the Jews*, dedicated to the present *Bishop of Winchester*, has offer'd an ingenious Conjecture, that this early Presidency of one as *Bishop* in the Bench of *Presbyters*, had its Rise from the Management of the *Jewish Synagogues*. The Passage being remarkable, I shall re-cite it at length. 'Tis in Book V. Page 408.

"The Government of the Synagogues (saith he) hath been often chang'd. In our Saviour's Time they were regulated by a certain Number of Doctors. There were one or two Persons set over these Doctors. The President and Vice-President were call'd the Chiefs of the Synagogue. Dr. Lightfoot gives this Title to three Persons who were set over ten Leaders. 'Tis also from thence that the Christian Church has taken its Discipline. For in the Beginning of every Church, there was a certain Number of Priests (or Presbyters) order'd, proportion'd to the Number of Christians. When the Cities were large as Jerusalem and Rome, they placed two Bishops in them: But most of the Christian Churches had but one Bishop, as most of the Synagogues had but one Head. There was no other Difference put

"between Bishops and Priests but that of Presidency, which was given to Age and Merit. And therefore the Names of Bishops and Priests are so often confounded in the Gospel, as well as among the Jews. All the Doctors that took Care of the Synagogue, were of the same Order, and held the same Rank. In following this Original of Discipline, which is natural, since the Jews which are jealous of their Rites, laid the first Foundation and Peopling of Churches; 'tis easy to take off the Objections against Episcopacy, which would become difficult, by following other Principles.

Now for such a meer honorary Presidency of one of the same Order and Rank with the other Presbyters in every Church, tho' it does not appear to be of divine Right, yet it is so far from being the Matter of the present Debate, that our great Complaint against the Episcopacy which the Author contends for, is, that the *Diocesans* have depriv'd these senior Presbyters or Bishops as well as their Colleagues, in every particular Church of their Pastoral Power, (which the Apostles themselves never did) and by monopolizing it to themselves, have occasioned the general Decay and woful Corruption of Christian Discipline. And if we should suppose that the Elders of Jerusalem did allow such an honorary Presidency as this to St. James, it was either on the Account of his Character as an *Apostle*, or they might do so on the Account of his Relation to, and personal Converse with our blessed Lord: And this without supposing him to be of any distinct Order and Office from themselves. I am sure, for those whom our Author calls *Dividers on the Principle of Parity*, they offer'd at the *Savoy-Conference*, to yield to much more than this, in order to an Accommodation, even to that much higher Authority which Archbishop Usher's Model reserves to our Bishops, insisting only on their restoring the Pastoral Power of the true scriptural Bishops. And indeed, without the Restoration thereof, Men may make a loud Noise about Church-Government and Discipline; but the Thing it self can never be exercis'd to any valuable Purpose, when it is engross'd in so large a District into one Hand, or rather turn'd over to a Lay-Chancellor, as the Bishop's Deputy. As Mr. Baxter has unanswerably prov'd, in his Treatise of *Diocesan Episcopacy*.

3. Whereas the Author tells us, "That St. Paul submitted himself to give an Account to St. James in Council, *Acts xxi*. of the Success of his Ministry among the Gentiles. And that they laid that express Command upon him, *Do therefore this that we say unto thee, &c.* And he so readily obey'd". I cannot upon the strictest Perusal of the Passage, see any solid Foundation for these strange Inferences which the Author would draw from it. For why might not St. Paul give St. James and the rest of the Elders of the Church at Jerusalem, an Account of his Success in the Conversion of the Gentiles, without supposing them to have any Authority over him? Or, that by giving them such an Account he submitted to their Authority? The Author may as well suppose that he recogniz'd the Authority of the Brethren over him, to whom he made the same Narrative: Nay, since the Author supposes St. James to be no *Apostle*, and that the Elders were in Council with him; Does he not strangely derogate from the Dignity of the Apostolical Character, by supposing an *Apostle* accountable to a Council of *Presbyters*, and their Chairman or Moderator, as his Ecclesiastical Superiors? Our Author sure little consider'd how extravagantly he exalts the Power of a Presbytery, when he thus subjects an *Apostle* to its superior Authority. But whatever *Diocesan Bishops* may be, *Presbyters* are too modest to draw any such absurd Inferences as this from the *Apostle's* Condescension and brotherly Respect, in giving them this Account of his Proceedings. He needed no other Motive to do that, than that he knew it would be highly acceptable to them, to hear of that glorious Light of the Gospel being diffus'd to those Gentile Nations that before sat in the Region and Shadow of

of Death. And whereas our Author saith, "That St. James and the Council laid their express Command upon him; Now therefore do this that we say unto thee, &c. And he so readily obey'd". I should have thought that he would have much better consulted both St. Paul's Credit and theirs, by supposing those Words to be no more than a friendly *Entreaty* or *Advice*, which the Apostle, upon the Reasons they offer'd, freely comply'd with. I am sure the Expressions of the inspir'd Historian import no more than such a brotherly *Advice*. And the Apostle Paul (who to the Jews became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews, 1 Cor. ix. 20.) may well be suppos'd ready to follow it. And therefore for our Author to suppose it an express Command, as it lessens St. Paul's Character on the one Hand, so on the other, it argues a strange Presumption in St. James and the Elders of Jerusalem, to assume such a Dictatorship over an Apostle himself. But if we should allow it to be a Command, it serves only to prove the stated Authority of a Presbytery, and their Chairman or Moderator; but by no Means that of a Diocesan Bishop. And their Authority must be (as our Author argues) a settled Institution indeed, if an Apostle thought himself oblig'd to submit to it.

4. I would seriously desire the Author to consider, how alien his Language on this Subject is from the Simplicity and Humility of the Apostolical Age. The Apostles were indeed once infected with something of this ambitious Humour, when their Minds were tinctur'd with carnal Apprehensions of the Messiah's temporal Kingdom. They were then full of the Question, *Who should be greatest?* But after our Saviour had read them such a Lecture of Humility, and represented their Office to them as a Ministry, and not a Domination, Mark ix. 33, 34, &c. Matt. xx. 25, 26, &c. Luke xxii. 24, 25, &c. And especially after the Holy Spirit had descended upon them in its eminent Graces as well as extraordinary Gifts; we read nothing of this Affectation of pompous Titles and a Dictatorial Power. And therefore this swelling Language of our Author, concerning St. James's Primacy, his See and Throne, his Superiority in his own District, his decretory Speech, his authoritative Style, his Commands to St. Paul, &c. favours much more of the Vanity and Pride of the succeeding Ages, than of the Humility and Self-denial of the truly Primitive. And therefore I would recommend to the Author's Consideration, that memorable Passage of the truly judicious Mr. Hales of Eaton. 'Tis in his *Treat of Schism*, Pag. 13. "But that other Head of Episcopal Ambition, (saith he) concerning Supremacy of Bishops in diverse Sees, one claiming Supremacy over another; as it hath been from time to time a great Trespas against the Churches Peace: So 'tis now the final Ruin of it. The East and

West, thro' the Fury of the two Prime Bishops, being irremediably separated without all Hope of Reconcilement. And besides all this Mischief, 'tis founded on a Vice contrary to all Christian Humility, without which no Man shall see his Saviour. For they do but abuse themselves and others that would persuade us, that Bishops by Christ's Institution have any Superiority over other Men; farther than of Reverence; or that any Bishop is superior to another farther than positive Order agreed upon among Christians, hath prescribed. For we have believed him that hath told us, That in Jesus Christ there is neither High nor Low; and that in giving Honours, every Man should be ready to prefer another before himself. Which Saying certainly cuts off all Claim of Superiority, by Title of Christianity, except Men think that these Things were spoken only to poor and private Men. Nature and Religion agree in this, That neither of them have an Hand in this Heraldry of *Secundum sub & supra*. All this comes from Composition and Agreement of Men among themselves. Wherefore this Abuse of Christianity, to make it Lacquey to Ambition, is a Vice for which I have no extraordinary Name of Ignominy: And an ordinary I will not give it, lest you should take so transcendent a Vice to be but trivial". And the Remark that Dr. Stillingfleet makes on his Passage in citing it, is no less observable, *Irenicum*, Part II. Cap. 8. "Thus that grave and wise Person, (saith he) whose Words favour of a more than ordinary Tincture of a true Spirit of Christianity, that scorns to make Religion a Footstool to Pride and Ambition. We see plainly he makes all Difference between Church-Officers to arise from Consent of Parties, and not from any divine Law.

Upon the whole, I would advise the Author, when he produces such weak and inconclusive Arguments, that are so easily turn'd against himself, to learn so much Modesty, as to talk in a lower Strain than that of invincible Proofs, and incontestable Evidence. And I would much more earnestly advise him to greater Charity towards the Reformed Churches, than to contract the Catholick Church within the Bounds of what he calls the Episcopal Communion. If that Principle be not grossly Schismatical, I know not what Schism means. Let the Author then remember, That it was Diotrephes's Crime, that as he lov'd the Pre-eminence, so he, instead of receiving the Brethren, forbade them that would, and cast them out of the Church, Eph. iii. John ix. 10. Such uncharitable Excluders of others run the greatest Hazard of being excluded themselves, by the truly decretory Sentence of the only universal Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.



S E R M O N S

Preached on

Several Subjects.

V O L. II.

To the Congregation under the AUTHOR's
Pastoral Care.

 *As the Sermons contain'd in this Volume were formerly Preach'd to You; so to render them of more lasting Use and Service to the Good of Your Souls, is my chief Design in their present Publication. They may when leisurely Read, make a more deep and durable Impression than they cou'd when transiently Heard. And tho' I cannot say as the Apostle Peter, That I know I must shortly put off this Tabernacle; Yet I may say, that as long as I am in it, I think it meet to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance of what has been formerly deliver'd: I have therefore endeavour'd, that after my Decease you may have this brief Summary of practical Religion before your Eyes, 2 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 15. The Foundation of Christianity is laid in Repentance towards God and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And the Superstructure is carried on by those two comprehensive Duties of superlative Love to God, and sincere Love to our Neighbour. And there are no Motives to excite us to those Duties more powerful and persuasive than what are drawn from the Contemplation of the boundless Love of God, especially as manifested in sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. And 'tis on these important Heads that the Sermons contain'd in this Volume treat. I am sensible indeed, that these excellent and copious Subjects will suffer much thro' my defective Management of them. Nor am I ignorant that these Discourses want many Ornaments that might have recommended them to the Gust of curious and critical Readers. But I have chosen rather to adapt them to the meanest Capacities, that they might be of more general Use. Those nice and dry Criticisms on the Words of the sacred Text which some are so prone to overvalue, are (as one fitly compares them) not unlike the Light of Winter Nights, that may be clear indeed, but is usually very cold. And for overstudied Eloquence, 'tis of far less use in Popular Discourses. And indeed practical Christianity shines with the truest Lustre in its own native Simplicity and Plainness. Gold and Diamonds need no Paint to set them off. Divine Truths require nothing to command our Assent to them, but a clear Proposal of them. And the great Duties of Religion are better inculcated by Words of Weight and Authority, that may awaken and awe the Consciences of Men, than by empty Flourishes that only tickle their Ears. Divine Food is not rendred the more nourishing by poignant Sauce, or excessive Garniture. And as the Truths and Duties here recommended are the Essentials of our Holy Religion: So I can appeal to Your selves, that to promote the Belief and Practice of them, has been the chief Scope of my Ministerial Labours among you. 'Tis this Image of our Blessed Lord (consisting in a Faith working by Love) that I long to see more entirely formed in your Hearts. And that is to me incomparably more valuable than the particular Inscription of any Self-distinguish'd Party. I commend you therefore to God, and to the Word of his Grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among them that are sanctify'd, Acts xx. 37.*

J. B.

S E R-

S E R M O N XVI.

ON

The PARABLE of the Prodigal SON.

LUKE XV. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

- 11 *And he said, A certain Man had two Sons:*
 12 *And the younger of them said to his Father, Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me: And he divided unto them his Living.*
 13 *And not many Days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his Journey into a far Country, and there wasted his Substance with riotous living.*
 14 *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land; and he began to be in want.*
 15 *And he went and joined himself to a Citizen of that Country, and he sent him into his Fields to feed Swine.*
 16 *And he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat: And no Man gave unto him, &c. —*

THIS Parable of our Blessed Saviour is at once so instructive and so affecting; it does in so lively a manner represent the Extravagance and Folly of a licentious Sinner; it does so clearly describe the miserable Consequences and mischievous Effects of his vitious Course: It does so admirably set forth the wise Methods of Heaven to recover and reclaim him; and the ingenuous Actings of his Soul, when once brought into a relenting and penitential Frame. But above all, it does in so surprizing a manner discover to us the matchless Compassion of an offended God, to the greatest of returning Sinners, that I shall in some Discourses insist upon it; in hopes that they may prove successful, to awaken in some, such Prodigals as this in my Text, a deep Conviction of their Folly and Guilt, of their Misery and Danger; and produce in them those sincere Resolutions of returning to their Father, that will restore them to his tenderest Embraces, and to all the happy Entertainments of his House and Family.

If we look to the Occasion of the Parable it self, it was design'd by way of tacit Reproof to those proud Pharisees and Scribes, that murmur'd because our Lord freely admitted Publicans and Sinners to be his Hearers; nay, because he often chose to converse with them, in order to instruct and reclaim them. To that End, he proposes the Parable of the Shepherd that left the rest of his 99 Sheep that were safe in the Fold, to go and seek for one that was gone astray; which having found, he brought home with Joy. And that of the Woman that sought so diligently for one of her 10 Pieces of Silver which she had lost, and express'd so great Satisfaction upon her finding it again. And accordingly He tells us, the Holy Angels themselves rejoiced in the Conversion of a Sinner: Nay, in some respects, there was more Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repented, than over 99 Persons that needed no such Repentance (or Conversion,) see ch. 4. 10. Which Words must be understood with some allusion to that Passion of Joy in us, which is wont, for the present, to be more powerfully and sensibly excited

by some sudden and unexpected Good-tidings, than by the Consideration of greater Good, which we have the continued Possession of. So here the Conversion of a Sinner, especially of a profligate one, of whose Repentance there seem'd to be little hope, is an Event that we are therefore apt to be more strongly affected with; because 'tis so unlook'd for, and as it were comes upon us by a welcome Surprise. For so many righteous Persons to persevere in their holy Course, is in it self more valuable and considerable: But this being no more than what may be reasonably expected from them, we are not so apt to be transported with it, as with the glad News of a Sinner's Conversion, whom we had in our own Apprehensions given up for lost. And here our Saviour speaks concerning the Joy of God and Holy Angels, on such an occasion, as if the Motions of it were parallel to ours. And to represent farther to them how acceptable and pleasing the Conversion of a Sinner was to the Blessed God himself, he proposes this Parable of the prodigal Son. 'Tis indeed true, that our Saviour does by the prodigal Son more particularly point at those that were Sinners of the Gentiles, and were by Divine Grace recover'd to Repentance; as by the Elder Brother he intends those froward and self-esteeming Jews, that envied the Conversion of Gentile Sinners, and could scarce bear to hear of their being made Fellow-heirs with them of the Promises of God. As you may see in the Acts of the Apostles, with what Envy and Rage the Jews were fill'd, when Paul and Barnabas turn'd from them to the Gentiles, with the Offers of that Salvation which they slighted; see Acts xiii. from the 46th ver. to the End.

But the Characters given of the prodigal Son, are such as do indifferently belong to every impenitent Sinner, especially every profligate one, whether Jew or Gentile, whether living within or without the Pale of the visible Church. And accordingly I shall in treating on this Parable, consider the prodigal Son, as the true Emblem of every unconverted ungodly Sinner.

Now

Now in the *Parable* it self, we may take notice of these several Parts.

I. We have here an Account of the *Folly* of the *prodigal Son*, in v. 11, 12, 13.

II. We have an Account of the *Misery* he thereby *reduc'd* himself unto, v. 14, 15, 16.

III. We have the Relation of his *sincere Repentance* and *Return* to his *Father*.

IV. We have the *welcome Reception* and *Entertainment* he met with from his *Father* upon his *penitent Return*.

And at the End, there is an Account of his *Father's* just *Expostulation* with his *Elder Brother*, who envy'd this kind Treatment that the returning *Prodigal* met with.

I now begin with the

I. The Account we have here of the *Folly* of the *prodigal Son*.

'Tis said, *A certain Man had two Sons. And the younger of them said to his Father; Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falls to me: And he divided to them his Living.*

These Words do doubtless allude to the Custom, common then among *Merchants* and *Trading People*; that when their *Children* were grown up, were often wont to entrust them with a certain *Portion* of *Goods* and *Merchandise* to traffick with, allowing them to make the best Advantage of it by their own *Industry* and *Management*. And 'tis this the *Younger Son* requested of his *Father*: And the Request being in it self no way unreasonable, the *Father* readily complies with it, by dividing his *Living* (or *Substance*) between them, or so much of it as it was reasonable for them to expect. And had the *Younger Son*, when he received his *Portion*, traded with it under his *Father's* Inspection, and his prudent Advice and Conduct, 'tis probable we might have heard a good Account of him. But on the contrary we read, *That not many days after, (so eager and impatient was he to put his mad Projects in Execution) he gathered all together, and took his Journey into a far Country, and there wasted his Substance with riotous Living,* v. 13.

Now in Treating on this part of the *Parable*, it will be very proper to consider, what there is in the Condition and the Course of an *impenitent Sinner*, that is answerable to the Case and the Practice of the *prodigal Son* in the Text: For from the *Parallel* between them, we must deduce proper Observations for our Instruction.

Now by comparing them together, we may observe;

I. That we have a *Portion* of *Goods* allowed us by our *Heavenly Father*, to be improv'd for our own Advantage and Welfare.

II. Herein every unconverted *Sinner* betrays his wretched *Folly*, that he affects to live at the greatest distance from his *Heavenly Father*, that he may more freely indulge his sensual Lusts, and spend his *Portion* in riotous Living.

III. That while the unconverted *Sinner* can go on undisturbed in this vicious Course, he rarely entertains the least Thought of returning to God.

IV. From this being the Practice of the *Younger Brother*, we may infer, that young Persons are especially prone to run into such foolish and vicious Courses as these.

Of these in their Order.

I. From the *Father's* dividing his *Living* between the two *Brothers*, we may observe, that we have every one of us a *Portion* of *Goods* entrusted with us by our *Heavenly Father*, to be improv'd for our own Advantage and Welfare.

For this was common to both the *Sons*, each had his *Portion* assign'd when their *Father* divided his *Living* between them.

So we have all, (whether Good or Bad, whether Righteous or Wicked,) our *Portion* assign'd us; which if we us'd due Prudence and Care, Fidelity and Diligence in the Improvement of, it would turn to infinitely beneficial Account.

We have all of us the same reasonable Nature, and the same intellectual Powers. We have Understandings capable of being enrich'd with that Divine Knowledge

that will make us wise to Salvation. We have *Will*, capable of a happy Conformity to the Will of God, capable of choosing him for our rightful Lord, and our Sovereign Happiness and Good. We have *active Powers* capable of that faithful Service to him here, which will according to his gracious Promise entitle us to an eternal and glorious Reward. We have Souls capable to know, to adore, to love, to obey, to imitate the Blessed God, and to enjoy consummate Blessedness in his immediate Presence for ever. In a word, we have Souls capable of being adorn'd with Divine Grace here, and crown'd with Eternal Glory.

And we do not want suitable Advantages and Helps for improving these noble Capacities for so excellent Purposes. We have manifold Advantages of Instructions to inform our Judgments. We have the most powerful Motives and Arguments set before us, to win over our Hearts to God, and to his Service; and we have the most plain and clear Directions in our Duty, and highest Encouragements to it. We want no needful Means to engage us in the Ways of God, and to promote our Progress and Perseverance therein, in order to our attaining that final Salvation and Happiness, which is the End of our Faith and Hope, and should be the principal Scope of all our Endeavours.

Nay, we have manifold additional Talents committed to us, the faithful and industrious Improvement whereof would bring us in the most unspeakable Advantage and Gain. We have much precious Time to be carefully redeem'd; many Opportunities of doing, as well as receiving Good, to be observ'd and laid hold upon. We have various Gifts to be diligently us'd; and some of us, worldly Riches and Treasures to be laid out for the Glory and Service of God in this World, in order to the securing to our selves incomparably more valuable Returns in a better.

And to add no more, our Heavenly Father is most ready to assist us by his Spirit and Grace, so to improve this Portion of Goods we are now entrusted with; as shall render our final Account of it joyful, and the Reward of our Integrity and Diligence, unconceivably great and glorious: As doubtless, if the *prodigal Son* had continued with his *Father*, he would by his prudent Advice have prevented his Extravagancy, and the consequent Misery it brought upon him. In a word, our Heavenly Father is not wanting to us, in giving us what is needful and conducive to our greatest and eternal Welfare, if we be not grossly wanting to our selves.

All the Use I shall make of this Observation, shall be partly to remind you of your great Obligations to the Divine Goodness and undeserved Grace, that has entrusted all of us with so liberal a Portion of Goods, capable of being improved to so incomparable Advantage, even for the securing our endless Felicity: And partly to excite your serious Concern to improve it aright; since if you do not, you will be inexcusable, and have nothing to lay the blame of your own Misery on, but your own Perverseness and wilful Folly. God has committed to all of us more or less of valuable Talents, and it must be owing to our inexcusable Negligence and Wickedness, if our due Management of them do not secure to us a happy Entrance into our Master's Joy. He has put into our Hands a plentiful Stock, which if we use well, our Gain will be unspeakable. But if we either through our Sloth improve it not, or through our Extravagancy squander it away, we have none to complain of but our selves, and shall be found speechless when our Lord shall call us to an Account.

But because this is only presuppos'd in the *Parable*, I shall insist no longer thereon, but proceed to the

II. Observation, from this part of the *Parable*, viz. Herein every unconverted *Sinner* betrays his *Folly*, that he affects to live at the greatest distance from God, that he may more freely indulge his sensual Lusts.

Thus

Thus the first Thing that the prodigal Son does, after he had gather'd all together, was to take a Journey into a far Country, where he should be from under his Father's Eye and Inspection, from under his Authority and Government, and out of the reach of his unwelcome Admonitions and Reproofs: And being thus far enough from his Father, he takes his swing, lays the Reins on the neck of his Lufts, and spends his Substance in riotous Living.

And herein his Practice and Course is exactly copied out by every ungodly impenitent Sinner.

First, Every such unconverted Sinner departs from God, and affects to live at the greatest distance from him.

'Tis true indeed, he cannot altogether so depart from God, as this prodigal Son did from his earthly Father. The Sinner can go no where from the essential Presence of his heavenly Father, and can live no where from under the Inspection of his omniscient Eye. We can never free our selves from the Obligation of his Authority and Laws, and much less can we go out of the reach of his Rebukes, or of his avenging Justice.

But yet every unconverted Sinner does, as far as in him lies, alienate himself, and depart from the Blessed God.

'Tis true, he can go no where out of his Presence, and from under the Notice and Observation of his All-seeing Eye: But yet he goes as far as he can. For he wilfully turns his Back to God, and lives in continual Forgetfulness of him. 'Tis the secret Language of his Heart; *There is no God*, or at least his *Will*, *that there were none*, Psal. xiv. 1. *God is not in all his Thoughts*, Psal. x. 4. He does his utmost to banish him thence, and rase out the Sense and Impression of his Being out of his Mind. Or if those Thoughts do at any time offer themselves, or are by the Word or Providence of God, as it were forc'd upon his Soul; he is extremely uneasy under them, and restless 'till he has shaken them off. He is well contented to live without God in the World: And how open soever God's Eyes are on the miserable Sinner, he wilfully closes his from beholding so unwelcome an Object. And no wonder that he should be so averse to think of him; the very Thoughts of whom remind him of his Guilt, and administer matter of Terror and Dread to his alarmed Conscience and trembling Heart. There is no more of Intercourse or Converse on his part between him and God, by daily Meditation and secret Prayer, &c. than if indeed he were at the greatest distance imaginable from him. 'Tis the very Language of his Heart to God, *Depart from me*, Job xxi. 14.

'Tis true, he can live no where from under the Obligation of God's Authority and Laws: But yet he does withdraw his Neck from his Government, and departs from him by refusing Obedience to his Commands. He has no Inclination to observe his Laws (which he looks upon as an intolerable Yoke) and therefore is not very desirous or solicitous to understand, and much less to consider them, and meditate upon them. He is resolv'd to live as he list, and to walk after the Imagination of his own Heart, and in the way of his own Eyes; and therefore does not trouble himself with any anxious Enquiries about the Will of God; whom he is little concern'd to honour or please.

Indeed his whole Life is a continued Deviation from the holy perfect Laws of God, to which he has little regard in his Actions, and much less in his daily Words and Thoughts. What are the continual Motions of his Soul, but a continued Scene of atheistical, irreligious, impure, envious, malicious, revengeful, covetous, ambitious, proud, or at best vain Thoughts and Desires? And how does the impure Fountain of his Heart pour out those polluted Streams that daily defile his Lips and Life. Alas! whether God approve or disapprove, accept or abhor his Actions, is none of his serious Care. He affects to live without any Controul or uneasy Restraints from his Authority and Commands, and is very willing that God and he may have nothing to do with one another. 'Tis the secret Language of his Heart;

What is the Almighty that I should serve Him? Job ii. 15.

'Tis true indeed, He cannot live out of the reach of God's paternal Admonitions and Rebukes, nor out of the reach of his avenging Justice:

But yet he goes as far from him as he can. He stops his Ears against all his gracious Counsels and needful Reproofs. He flights his compassionate Admonitions and Warnings. He either does not believe them, or does not ponder and regard them. He endeavours to stifle the Convictions, and to silence the faithful Remonstrances of his own Conscience, when it acts the part of God's Deputy in his Bosom. He can go no where, but where God can find and call him to an account: But yet he lives in a wilful and stupid Inconsideration of that awful Reckoning; and in his presumptuous Thoughts endeavours to put away that evil Day far from him. He acts as if he were accountable to no higher Tribunal, and were not under the jealous Eye of his impartial Judge. He cannot go out of the reach of God's avenging Arm; but yet he is as secure as if he had no such tremendous Justice to dread; and is as insensible of his Danger from it, as if he were easily able either to escape or resist, or at least to bear it. He lives as if he had nothing to fear from him, notwithstanding his innumerable Provocations of him. In a word, he lives as if he had less to do with God than with all the World.

Nay, I may add under this Head, that the Prodigal when he had got his Portion into his own Hands, did, by going into a far Country, shew how little regard he had for his Father's Affection and Love, his Company and Converse; and how little he valued the Entertainment and Provision of his House. So does every unconverted Sinner in his Estrangement from God, express a wretched Contempt of his paternal Favour and Affection. He shews how little he desires his Presence, how unwilling he is to keep up any dutiful Converse with him; how backward to draw nigh to him; and how much more pleased with his Distance from him: Nay, he hereby manifests, how much he under-values all the Privileges of his Family, and flights all the plentiful Entertainments of his House; and how little he regards any farther Hopes from his future Kindness. He is content with his Inheritance in present Possession, and willing to forego his Claim to any Inheritance in Reversion. He is desirous to go with the Prodigal, where, if possible, his Father and he might never hear from or of one another.

And as every unconverted Sinner does resemble the Prodigal in this Instance of his Folly, his voluntary Departure from his Father. So,

Secondly, He does in this State of Alienation from God, the more freely indulge his sensual Lufts.

As the Prodigal when he was got into a far Country out of his Father's sight, did then venture to spend his Substance in riotous Living, i. e. in Luxury and Pride, in Gluttony and Drunkenness, in Chambering and Wantonness, in Gaming and Revelling; in a word, in all those sensual Excesses that either his own vicious Inclinations, or the wicked Company he haunted, could prompt him to.

And indeed, in this many ungodly impenitent Sinners do literally trace the Steps of the Prodigal in my Text. In him the leud Rakes of the Age may see their own Picture drawn. Thus do they with him spend their Time, and devour their Living among their Cups and their Harlots, in the Society of such jovial and wicked Companions as themselves. All they can get, goes to maintain their Pride, and pamper their Appetites, and furnish their impure and excessive Pleasures; and to gratify their voluptuous and sensual Inclinations. And thus their Portion is soon spent in the Tavern or Ale-House, the Play-House or Gaming-House, or in the Stews: 'Tis quickly made a Sacrifice to their Expensive Lufts, whose Cravings are violent and insatiable, Prov. xxx. 15. Like the Prodigal they make a quick Dispatch of their Accounts; and bring this at the Foot of them, *all is spent*.

But

But tho' all unconverted Sinners do not openly run into so extravagant Excess of Riot as this *Prodigal* did; yet, all of them in their state of Alienation from God, do give the Swing more or less to their vicious Inclinations, and abuse the Portion of good Things he has entrusted them with, to the Service of their Lusts. Those *Understandings* that God has given them for attaining Divine Knowledge, and Wisdom, they employ about a thousand impertinent unconcerning Vanities. Those *Wills* and *Affections* he has given them, that they might choose and love him, desire after and delight in him: They fix them on the despicable *Objects* of *Sense* and *Time*; they give this vain *World* that supreme Interest in their Hearts that is due to God, and are *Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of him*. That *Vigour* and *Strength*, which they should employ in the diligent Service of God, they spend in the eager restless Pursuit of earthly Riches or Honours, and in the immoderate Cares of this perishing Life. That *Time* they should devote to God, is engross'd by the *World* and the *Flesh*; wholly spent either in secular Business, or in Pastimes and Sports, in needless Visits and impertinent Discourses, in Romances and Plays, in Cards and Dice, and a thousand Follies; while God and their own Souls, and their everlasting Concerns stand by neglected and disregarded. Those very *natural Parts* that should be consecrated to God, by being employed to recommend serious Religion, are rather perverted to spread the Contagion of Irreligion and Vice, in their profane and impious, their leud and unsavoury Discourses; in which, whatever may appear of *flashy Wit*, there is nothing of *solid Wisdom*: Nay, those *Estates* that God has given them to be laid out for his Glory and Interest, are either *boarded up* to gratify their insatiable Avarice, or *perverted* from their true Use, by being squander'd away to maintain their Luxury and Pride, as if they were ambitious of the Rich Man's Character, *to be clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and to fare sumptuously every Day*, Luke xvi. 19.

Thus the *unconverted Sinner* having departed from God, walks in the ways of his own Heart, and after the sight of his own Eyes. Having no solicitous Thoughts to please him, he studies only to please himself. Having cast off all regard to the Laws of God, he makes his own *Humour* and *Inclination*, his own corrupt and misguided *Will*, his only *Law* and *Rule*. Having no serious Sense of the Presence and all-seeing Eye of God, his sinful Appetites and Passions, his brutish, his sensual and worldly Lusts, have little Check or Restraint but what may be laid upon them by the Penalties of human Laws, or the Awe of earthly Superiors. The Great God being banish'd out of their Minds and Hearts, Sin and Folly usurp his Throne, and reign uncontroll'd there. Having broke off from God, they become an easy Prey to Satan, who quickly gains and keeps the Possession of them. Being now far off from God, (as to any serious Thoughts, or to any reverential dread of him) they securely run with a sinful World into the common excess of Riot, and join with them in fulfilling the Lusts of the *Flesh* and the *Mind*, Eph. ii. 3. But,

III. I farther observ'd, that while the *unconverted Sinner* can go on undisturbed in his vicious Course, 'tis hard to bring him to any serious Thoughts of returning to God.

Thus, while the *Prodigal* had any thing left to spend upon his Harlots and Cups, while he had wherewith to rant and revel, and maintain this leud way of Living, we hear not one word concerning his Father; no Sense of his Folly in departing from him; no Resolution of returning to him.

And, alas! the Case is much the same with the generality of *ungodly unconverted Sinners*, especially with more open and profligate ones. While they are engaged in the eager and violent pursuit of their Lusts, and can make Provision to fulfil them, there is comparatively but little hope of reclaiming them. Alas! they are not at leisure in the hurry of Business, or in the tumult of their Lusts, to attend to the Dictates and Checks of their own Conscience, or the Voice of Conscience is drown'd

in the noise of their jovial Company. They do as it were bar all Access of the Holy Spirit of God to their Hearts, by refusing to *commune* in secret with them. And, alas! how little would his Admonitions be regarded in the midst of their merry Entertainments, their *Musick* or their *Wine*, their *Balls* and *Dances*, their *Pastimes* and *Sports*? There's no place for the serious Thoughts of God in the *Tavern* or *Ale-House*, the *Play-House*, or *Gaming-House*, those must be chiefly expected in our *Closets*, and our serious *Retirements* there, to which such Sinners are usually entire and woful Strangers. There's no probable means of reclaiming them, but either by the *Word* or the *Providence* of God. For his *Word*, they are so wont to bring a careless and unattentive Mind to it, nay to *trifle* and *toy*, to *talk* and *laugh* when they should hear it, that 'tis no wonder it leaves no Impression on their Minds; or if it did, alas, how quickly is it ras'd out, by their running into Company and Diversions, instead of retiring into their Closets. And therefore God does usually make use of the severe Methods of his Providence to set home the Admonitions of his Word (of which more hereafter.)

IV. From this being mention'd as the Practice of the *Younger Brother*, we may observe, that *young Persons* are especially prone to run into such Folly and Extravagancy.

In that *Age*, their carnal Appetites and Lusts are usually strong, and those sensual Pleasures that are suitable to them, carry Charms that are not easily resisted. Their *Judgments* are not then matur'd by Consideration and Experience. Young Persons are impatient of any Restraint and Check upon their *sinful Inclinations*; and are fond of what they mistake for desirable Liberty, I mean the Freedom of doing what they list. Their *Senses* are quick and vigorous, and have a strong relish of agreeable Objects; so that the *Temptations* of this defiling World have great Advantage over them, and seldom miss of prevailing, if they are not carefully kept out of the road of them. Nay, *young Persons* are apt to think, that some Allowance must be made for their green Years; and think 'tis no great Crime for them to take their swing, and try the World: So little are they apprehensive of their Folly in it, and so little do they foresee the *mischievous Consequences* of it.

I shall close this Discourse on the first Branch of the Text, by making a few practical Reflections on the foregoing Observations. And,

I. Does every *unconverted Sinner* betray his own Folly in his living at a distance from God, and indulging his sensual Lusts? Then let me hence urge every such *impenitent Sinner* to consider the Folly of his Practice.

Who they are that do thus depart from God, and give the swing to their vicious Inclinations, you may see in the Description already given of them, which I need not repeat.

Now that I may convince all such *Prodigals* of their extreme Folly, I shall only desire them to consider;

1. That the Distance and Estrangement from God which you affect, is not only most unreasonable in it self, but is your own greatest Infelicity.

'Tis most unreasonable in it self.

Any one might have told the *prodigal Son*, that it was most reasonable he should continue in his Father's Family, and manage his Concerns under his watchful Eye and prudent Direction; and that it was no way advisable for a raw unexperienc'd Youth to venture himself into a far Country.

But, 'tis far more unreasonable for you to depart from your Heavenly Father, and affect to live at a distance from him; for you have really infinitely more to do with him, than with all the World besides. You absolutely depend on his daily Power and Goodness, for the Preservation of your Lives, and the continuance of all the Comforts thereof. You have infinitely more to hope from his Favour, and to fear from his Displeasure, than from all the World's. He is like to be your most desirable Friend, or dreadful Enemy. He is the Witness and Judge of your Actions, by whose irreversible Sentence your Eternal State must be

be determin'd. And is this the God whom you flee from, and are so desirous to have nothing to do with? Alas! you have Concerns of infinite moment and consequence to transact with him: And is it reasonable then that you should banish him as much as possible out of your Minds, and shun all serious Converse with him?

Nay consider, this your voluntary Distance from God, is your greatest Infelicity.

To be doom'd to depart from God for ever, is the compendious sum of the Misery of the Damned; and will you already begin to inflict that Curse upon your selves? To a holy Soul, the serious Thoughts of God are the Spring of the highest Satisfaction and Delight; they are the sweetest Entertainment and Solace to his Mind, and capable to allay its bitterest Sorrows. What then does the miserable Sinner in shutting God out of his Thoughts, but expose his own Soul to the most disconsolate Darkness? Of which the Sinner may observe this one convincing Evidence; that he who is unwilling to think of God, is afraid of Converse with his own Soul; nay, afraid of his own serious and retired Thoughts. And can we think that Man any other but miserable that is afraid to look within, and to commune with his own Heart? That is forc'd to seek Ease and Freedom from Terrors and Fears, by fleeing from himself, and from his own Thoughts? For indeed, we can scarce be alone and considerate, but the Thoughts of God will offer themselves to our Minds: And is that Man's Condition desirable to whom those Thoughts are a continual Terror, instead of being a Delight?

Again, What is it to be under the Government and Laws of God, but like a Child's being under his Father's prudent Counsel and Direction, who will advise him the best for his own Welfare. And if the Laws of God be no other than the wise and compassionate Counsels of our Heavenly Father, directing us in the way to our true Eternal Blessedness, what greater Mischief can we do our selves than to turn a deaf Ear to them? Alas! to be left to our own Will, as our only Guide, is like a raw Youth being left in a most important Affair to his own giddy Counsels; or like a Ship to be in a very hazardous Voyage, left to the Conduct of an ignorant hair-brain'd Pilot! Alas! for us to forsake him, is only to change Masters: To cast off his Yoke is in effect to put on the Devil's Chains: And to reject that Service of God, which is our truest Liberty, is to become Vassals to Satan, whose Work and Wages are very suitable; the one ignominious, and the other terrible.

2. Consider, that the free Gratification of your sensual Lusts, which you aim at in your voluntary Departure from God, is really the greatest Mischief and Injury that you can do to your selves.

'Tis but a continued Attempt to debase your own Nature, and sink your selves as low, or lower than the Beasts that perish. 'Tis a compliance with the Counsel of your worst Enemies, in opposition to the Warnings of your truest Friends. Every sensual Lust you indulge, you give Conscience a deep Wound, you sow new Seeds of Anguish and Horror in your own guilty Minds, you incense the Wrath of an Almighty God, and expose your selves to his Eternal Vengeance: And do you call this desirable Liberty, to be free only to debase, to stab, to undo and destroy your selves? Methinks

'tis an affecting Description that the Wise-man gives of such a young Prodigal, when he represents him overcome by the alluring Insinuations of the impudent Prostitute, when he saith; *With her much fair Speech, she caus'd him to yield; With the flattering of her Lips, she forced him. He goes after her straightway as an Ox goes to the Slaughter, or as a Fool to the Correction of the Stocks; till a Dart strike through his Liver; as a Bird hasteth to the Snare, and knows not 'tis for its Life; see Prov. vii. 21, 22, 23.* Such a stupid and sottish Wretch is the licentious Sinner; with such amazing Folly is he hurried on in the pernicious Paths of Sin; and so blindly but eagerly does he pursue his own Destruction. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more fully afterwards, both under the 2d and 3d Branches of the Parable.

But

II. Is it so hard to bring an impenitent Sinner to serious Thoughts of returning to God, while he goes on undisturbed in his vitious Course; O let none then venture upon such a vitious Course, upon a vain Presumption that they'll leave it again when they come to maturer Age.

And, I the rather suggest this Caution, because young Persons are apt, I know not why, to plead a Privilege, and think they may be allow'd to take their swing for a while, designing, but they know not when, to take up, and entertain wiser Thoughts and Counsels. But alas, how little do such understand or consider the Corruption of human Nature, and the danger of being hardened through the deceitfulness of Sin? How little do they foresee the Difficulty of conquering vitious Habits, when rivetted by customary Practice? Jer. xiii. 23. How little do they think, how hard it is to dispossess the strong Man arm'd, when he has once establish'd his Interest by long Possession! How little do they consider the Difficulty of recovering Conscience to any tender Sense, after so much has been done to stupify and sear it? How little do they think of the Danger of being entirely abandoned by the Spirit of God after long Resistance, and given up to judicial Blindness and Obduracy? How little do they consider how steep and easy a Descent the Road of Hell is, but how difficult and painful it will be to retreat, and climb up to the Path of the Just that is on High! We see nothing but extremity of Misery brought the Prodigal to himself. And God is not oblig'd to use such extraordinary means for every Sinners Conversion: And perhaps your selves like not this way of being reclaimed. O then prevent the Prodigal's Misery, by avoiding his Folly, instead of venturing upon his Folly upon a most uncertain Prospect of the like happy Conversion. 'Tis far better, not to depart from our Father's Family, than to be brought back by extream Distress, especially when we consider how few that do depart do return; and how few comparatively of those that run into the Prodigal's Folly and Excess, do indeed imitate his Repentance. We cannot say, *Vestigia nulla retrorsum*, but we may say, *Vestigia rara retrorsum*. And we may upon the Authority of an Inspired Writer, deliver it as an Observation at least generally true, concerning such leud Prodigals; And, O that all of you would look upon it as an awful Warning, None that go to her (speaking of the whorish Woman) return again; neither do they take hold of the paths of Life, Prov. ii. 19.

S E R M O N XVII.

O N

The PARABLE of the Prodigal SON.

LUKE XV. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

- 11 *And he said, A certain Man had two Sons :*
 12 *And the younger of them said to his Father, Father, give me the Portion of Goods that falleth to me: And he divided unto them his Living.*
 13 *And not many Days after, the younger Son gathered all together, and took his Journey into a far Country, and there wasted his Substance with riotous living.*
 14 *And when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in that Land; and he began to be in want.*
 15 *And he went and joined himself to a Citizen of that Country, and he sent him into his Fields to feed Swine.*
 16 *And he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat: And no Man gave unto him.*
 17 *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired Servants of my Father's have Bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with Hunger! &c. —*

HAVING in the former Discourse, spoken concerning the Folly of the Prodigal Son, I now proceed to consider,
 II. The Account which this Parable gives us of the Misery to which the Prodigal Son was reduc'd by his own Folly.

And of that we read in the End of the 13th, 14th, 15th, and 16th Verses.

He wasted his Substance in riotous Living; and when he had spent all, there arose a mighty Famine in the Land, and he began to be in want, and he went and join'd himself to a Citizen in that Country, who sent him into his Fields to feed Swine, and he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks which the Swine did eat, and no Man gave unto him, &c.

Now if we compare the Case of the Prodigal Son, with that of an unconverted ungodly Sinner, we shall find, that the one is Parallel to the other, in such Particulars as these.

I. That the Course of every impenitent ungodly Sinner, like that of the Prodigal, leads to Misery and Ruin; and if their Repentance prevent not, is like to end therein.

II. That the ungodly Sinner will usually rather bear any Hardships in his sinful Course, than think of returning to God, and is usually only brought to it by Extremity.

III. That therefore a wise and gracious God does often see meet to use such severe Methods to awaken him to Repentance.

Of these in their Order: And,

I. The Course of every ungodly impenitent Sinner (like that of the Prodigal in the Text) leads to nothing but Misery and Ruin; and if his Repentance prevent not, will certainly end therein.

You see the Prodigal had not long had his Portion of Goods in his own Management, he had not spent much time in that far Country, from under his Father's prudent Eye, and tender Care, but we have a short and sad Account, that he had quickly wasted his Substance; All was spent. His Prodigality first made him a Beggar, and

then a Slave, and then he was upon the Point of perishing for Want.

To the like calamitous and forlorn Condition, will that vile and pernicious Course that every ungodly Sinner takes, sooner or later lead him: He can expect nothing but Misery and Destruction as the Issue of it.

But that I may draw the Parallel as near as possible, I shall shew,

I. That the Course of ungodly Sinners, especially those that are profligately vicious, does often lead, even to such temporal Misery and Ruin, as the Prodigal here reduc'd himself to.

II. That however that be, the Course of every such ungodly Sinner does tend to his spiritual and eternal Ruin and Misery, and without Repentance will end therein.

I. The Course of ungodly Sinners, especially such as are profligately vicious, does usually tend even to such temporal Misery and Ruin, as the Prodigal reduc'd himself to.

When leud Sinners do, in the strictest Sense, copy the Prodigal in his licentious extravagant Course of Life; 'tis very common to see them reduc'd very soon into the same deplorable Circumstances, to the same extreme Poverty and Want, to the same abject and despicable Condition of Servitude. So that as the Rakes of the Age, see in him a lively Exemplar of their own Folly and Madnes; so they may (to compleat the Picture) in his wretched Condition, see a very instructive Emblem of the woful Issue and End they are hastning to.

Now that the Course of ungodly profligate Sinners, does often lead to such temporal Misery and Ruin, will appear, if we consider, either the natural Tendency of it, or if we consider, how often the divine Providence concurs in the Infliction of such penal Evils.

I. The Course of ungodly profligate Sinners, does usually lead to such temporal Misery, by the natural Tendency of Things themselves.

And

And this will appear if we consider, how often the *Vices* of such profligate Sinners have a natural Tendency to expose them to *Poverty* and *Want*, to *Ignominy* and *Shame*, to *Diseases* or *Death*.

The *Vices* of profligate Sinners, have often a natural Tendency to expose them to *Poverty* and *Want*.

Nature is contented with a little Expence, in order to its comfortable Sustenance and Support.

But the Lusts of Men are usually very expensive, and as insatiable in their Cravings as the *Grave*, that never says, *It is enough*. The *Hunger* and *Thirst* of a regular Appetite, are easily satisfy'd upon cheap and reasonable Terms; but the unruly Appetite of the *Glutton* and the *Drunkard*, (that is as curious about the *Quality*, as excessive in the *Quantity* of Meats and Drinks, and will not be satisfy'd without the choicest Dainties, or strongest Liquors, and a very plentiful Measure of them too,) such an Appetite as this, is a very costly Thing to maintain; and if a Man's Purse be not very deep, will soon bring him to the Bottom of it. No wonder that the *Prodigal's* Substance was soon wasted in riotous Living; and that when his luxurious Expences to pamper his *Flesh*, so far exceeded his Income, we quickly hear, *He had spent all*. And thus does many a *Sot*, in a short time, squander away in the *Ale-house* and *Tavern*, what should have been a lasting Stock and Fund for his own or Family's Subsistence. 'Twas the wise Man's Observation of old, That the *Drunkard* and the *Glutton* shall come to *Poverty*. And therefore he cautions his Son that he should not be among *Wine-bibbers*, and riotous Eaters of *Flesh*, Prov. xxiii. 20, 21. He had need of a large Estate, that does with the rich Sensualist, fare sumptuously every Day.

And the profligate Sinner's Intemperance does the more hasten his temporal Ruin, when it is accompany'd with that other Vice it so naturally leads to, viz. that of *Uncleanness* and *brutish Lust*. The Conversation of proud wanton Harlots, soon devour'd all the poor *Prodigal's* Living; the Demands of their *Vanity* and their *Luxury*, being usually as extravagant and insatiable as those of their Lust. And alas! How many a Man's unruly Lust has brought a speedy Consumption upon his Purse, as well as his Body? How many a Man has found, by sad Experience, what the wise Man had in vain warn'd him of, That the *whorish Woman* has brought him to a Piece of Bread, Prov. vi. 26.

And then for that *Vanity* and *Pride* that makes Men affect to go above their Condition and Rank in the World in their *Garb*, in their *Furniture*, in their *Equipage* and *Attendance*, and other Expences for Pomp and Ostentation, How costly a Sin is it? And how quickly does it consume his Stock? How soon does it usually sink him as much below his former Equals, as he before aspir'd to live above them, by reducing him to miserable Debts or Straits. So that his towering *Pride* is usually the Fore-runner of a shameful Fall, and ends in *Beggary*, or in a *Jail*.

And to this Sin of *Pride* I may join that of *Idleness*, that so often attends it. And of that the wise Man's Observation is just; That the *Talk of the Lips* tends only to *Penury*; and that *Drowsiness* clothes a Man with Rags. See also his lively Description of the *Sluggards Field*, Prov. xiv. 23. xix. 15. xxiv. 30. xxv. 2, &c.

And least such *Vices* as these should not consume the young *Prodigal's* Estate fast enough: There's one more that he is often addicted to, that commonly makes much quicker Dispatch, and often, like Gunpowder, blows him up in a trice; I mean that of *excessive Gaming*. And how many a voluptuous and silly Youth is thus fool'd out of his Substance by cunning Rooks, and left by them to exclaim against his own hard Fortune, when he should exclaim against his own Madness and Folly, that would venture his All upon the throw of a *Dye*, or rather put it into the Hands of cheating Gamesters.

In a Word, any one of these *Vices* alone is very capable to impoverish the profligate Sinner, and to reduce him to the last Degree of Necessity and Want,

and has a natural Tendency thereto, and much more when many or all of them concur to hasten and complete his Ruin. And the Examples of such licentious *Prodigals*, whom their Excess of Riot has brought into such a Condition of Indigence and Misery, are so many and so frequent in every Age, that 'tis a Wonder that they serve so little for the Warning of others. And that so few profligate Sinners will grow wise in time at others Cost, or will learn the woful Issue and Consequence of such Folly from any other Teacher but their own unhappy and sorrowful Experience. But, alas! Experience comes too late, when all is spent; and when *Poverty* and *Straits* come upon them with an irresistible Violence, like an armed Man, Prov. xxiv. ult. And truly if we should look among the miserable Poor, we should find comparatively few of them poor of God's making. Most owe their *Beggary* to their Sloth, or their expensive Lusts.

And as the profligate Sinner does often by his expensive Vices waste his Estate, so he takes the most effectual Course to ruin his Reputation. For as degenerate as the State of the World is, yet Vice has never so far gain'd the Ascendant over Virtue, as to be reckon'd among Men's Titles of Honour. To be a *Glutton* or a *Drunkard*, an *Adulterer* or *Whoremonger*, a *Gamester* or a *prodigal Spend-thrift*, are no Characters that any are desirous to be known by; how much sower they may be in Love with those vicious Practices themselves. Even the Commonness of Vice cannot wholly take off the just Odium of it: It will leave an indelible Brand on the Sinner's Memory. The Name of the Wicked shall rot, Prov. x. 7. And what the wise Man speaks of one particular Vice, viz. that of *filthy Lust*, may be applied to most others, that he who makes it his Practice, A Wound and Dishonour shall he get, and his Reproach shall not be wip'd away, Prov. vi. 33.

Nor is it unusual for such profligate Sinners, by their Intemperance and Lust, to lay the Foundation of those Diseases that render their Bodies as noysom as their defiled Souls; that make their Lives miserable, and hasten their untimely Death. How many such leud Wretches are there, that dye Martyrs in the Devil's Cause, either by sacrificing their Health and Life to their unruly Appetites and excessive Debaucheries; or by those Duels that the Heat of Wine and Rage hurries them to, or by those Crimes, in order to the maintaining their riotous Course, that bring them to a shameful End, as Examples of Publick Justice.

Thus does the profligate Sinner often ruin himself in this World. But,

2. Besides this natural Tendency of the profligate Sinner's Course to make him miserable here: The divine Providence does often concur in the Infliction of such penal Evils on him.

This was the *Prodigal's* Case; his expensive Lusts soon wasted his Living; but in order to the increasing his Straits, and reducing him to the greater Extremity, 'tis said, There arose a mighty Famine in that Land. A just Providence conspir'd to heighten his Punishment, and make him feel the more the bitter Effects of his own Riot and Folly. His own Extravagance spent all wherewith he should have reliev'd himself, and the Famine cut off in a great Measure all Hope of Relief from the Charity and Compassion of others. And this made his Condition look the more forlorn and desperate. None can doubt, but that 'tis a very righteous Thing with an offended God, to strip such profligate Sinners even of those temporal common Blessings which they so prodigally abuse and sacrifice to their own Lusts. 'Tis but just, that he who squanders away his Substance in riotous Living, among his *Cups* and his *Harlots*, should come to know the Worth of God's abused Mercies, by the Want of them, and should be brought to that severe Necessity of begging a Morsel of Bread. Such extreme Indigence and Want is but the deserved Fruit of such luxurious Prodigality and Waste. And the wise Providence of God does often so order Things, that such Sinners may evidently

vidently read their Crime in their Punishment, and discern their Folly in the present mischievous Consequence of it. As the Prodigal might easily do, when from excessive and abused Plenty, he was reduc'd to such a famishing Condition; when he that us'd to satisfy his Appetite with the most costly Dainties, is brought to that miserable Case, that he would fain have filled his Belly with the Husks that the Swine did eat, and no Man gave unto him. Thus Fools, because of their Transgression, and because of their Iniquity, are afflicted: Thus they even here often eat the Fruit of their own Doings; and are filled with their own Devices, Psal. cxii. 17. Prov. i. 31.

But because some ungodly Sinners are not so extravagant and profligate in their vitious Courses, as to bring such temporal Misery and Ruin on themselves, but can so dexterously manage their Lusts, as to reconcile them in a tolerable Measure with their worldly Interest. I therefore add,

II. That the Course of every unconverted and ungodly Sinner, does at least tend to his spiritual and eternal Misery, and will, without Repentance, end therein.

'Tis true indeed, every Sinner does not by his vain and sensual Life reduce himself to Beggary and Want, to Bondage and Slavery. But he does expose himself to Evils and Miseries, far more intolerable and dismal than these. Every ungodly Sinner squanders away that Time, and those Talents, which should be improv'd for the Glory of God, and for his own everlasting Advantage and Welfare. He does, by becoming a voluntary Servant of Sin, become a miserable Captive and Prey of Satan; and as it were, sells himself to do all the vile Drudgery of that imperious and cruel Task-Master. He does, by choosing to live a brutish and sensual Life, herd himself with the Swine, as if he were capable of no higher Interest or Happiness than the Beasts that perish. By choosing his Portion in this Life, he takes up with those vain Enjoyments of this World, which are as incapable to satisfy the Desires of a reasonable Soul, as Husks are to satisfy an hungry Appetite. He contents himself with empty Shadows, instead of solid substantial Good, and prefers broken Cisterns before the Fountain of living Waters. He does, as it were, turn Fellow-Commoner with the Swine, aspiring to no higher Felicity than what is to be found in sensual Entertainments, and impure carnal Delights. And (what is yet more dreadful) he does hereby alienate the Heart of God from him; he exposes himself to his just Abhorrence here, and to his terrible Vengeance for ever. He sacrifices the Interests and Hopes of an immortal Soul, to the momentary Gratification of his worldly and fleshly Lusts: He barter away the Pearl of Price for the Filth of Sin, or the Dirt of this World: He does by his repeated Neglects and Affronts of God, treasure up more Wrath against the Day of Wrath: He sows by every repeated Sin, new Seeds of Horror in his own Conscience, and lays in more Food for the immortal Worm, and more Fuel for the unquenchable Fire. In a Word, he lives to no other Purpose than to debase and pollute his own Soul; to stab and wound his own Conscience; to provoke the Indignation of an infinitely holy and just God, and to lay himself open to the Execution of all his terrible Threatnings: Nay, the farther Progress he makes in a sinful Course, he is thereby taking the larger Steps, and making swifter Advances towards remediless endless Destruction. So justly does the wise Man compare him while he goes on stupid and secure in his Wickedness, to the Ox going to the Slaughter, and to the Bird that hastens to the Snare, not knowing that it is for its Life, Prov. vii. 21, 22, 23. His Steps daily take hold of Hell; and his Paths lead down to the Chambers of (eternal) Death. So that without Repentance, remediless everlasting Misery will as certainly be the ungodly Sinner's End, as to perish for want, had been the Prodigal's end, if he had not taken up a reasonable Resolution of returning to his Father.

Nay, as the Prodigal at last came to feel his own Misery, and saw himself ready to perish. So there will

a Time come, when the ungodly Sinner shall be convinc'd of the deplorable Wickedness of his own Case, and see himself in danger of perishing for ever.

His jovial and sensual Life will not always last; and if nothing bring him sooner to this Extremity and Distress, yet Death at least will certainly do it. That will give him a miserable and sad Prospect indeed of his forlorn Condition; and shew him what the woful Consequences of his past Folly are like to be. That will convince him, that he has by his wicked and riotous Life, not only wasted his temporal Substance, but (which is unspeakably worse) he has lost his precious Soul, and thrown away his eternal Hopes. That will demonstrate to him, that all his sinful Pleasures are ended, and his vain Hopes expired, and his Dreams of sensual Happiness are vanish'd; and that now he has nothing before him, but what is incomparably worse than Poverty and Want, even remediless Vengeance and Misery, everlasting Perdition and Ruin; the very Thoughts whereof are enough to swallow him up in Horror and Despair: For in this forlorn Condition there appears no Glimpse of Hope; no Prospect of Redress and Relief. Of which more afterwards.

But,

II. I farther observ'd from the Words, That ungodly Sinners will usually choose rather to bear any Hardships in their sinful Course, than entertain Thoughts of returning to their heavenly Father.

It was thus with the poor Prodigal, in reference to his earthly Father. When he had spent all, he found himself in pinching Straits: And one would think his first Reflection thereon should awaken in him ingenuous Thoughts of returning to his Father. From whom had he more Ground to expect Compassion and Pity, than from him, notwithstanding all his undutiful Carriage? Sure then he'll apply himself first to him for Relief, and try what Effect a penitent Submission may have to move the Bowels of a tender Father towards him: No, rather than do that he'll sell himself for a Slave; nay, he'll stoop to the meanest and most ignominious Employment of a Swine-herd. (An Employment, not only most contemptible among the Egyptians, who refus'd to admit such to their Temples, and even the lower Sort of People disdain'd to contract any Affinity with them, as Herodotus tells us; but even among the Jews themselves, Swine being among them accounted unclean Beasts). Yet to this vile and scandalous Office (as it was then esteem'd) will the foolish Prodigal rather debase himself than submit to his Father; he'll rather be another Man's Slave in the Fields, than enjoy the Freedom of a Child in his Father's House; he'll rather stoop to the basest Drudgery Abroad, than have the most honourable and easy Employment at Home; nay, he'll rather choose to feed on Husks here, than to partake of the most plentiful Provision at his Father's Table: So that could those Husks have fill'd his Belly, he had not thought of returning Home.

And how lively an Emblem is this of the unaccountable Aversion of a revolted Sinner to return to God! How exactly does he herein resemble this foolish and perverse Prodigal! Even thus does he prefer the ignominious Vassalage of Satan and Sin, before the desirable Liberty of the Children of God. Thus does he prefer the pernicious and restless Drudgery of his shameful and hateful Lusts, before that Service of God, which would be his highest Honour and Happiness: Nay, thus does he prefer the Husks of impure and brutish Pleasures, that only leave a tormenting Sting behind them, before all the rich Entertainments of his Father's House; before all the solid and satisfying Joys of serious Religion. Thus does he voluntarily choose rather to live the Life of a Brute, than the Life of a Saint. He would rather bear the shameful Yoke of the Devil (the vilest Usurper, and the most rigorous Tyrant, whose Commands are most unreasonable in themselves, and most pernicious to his own Interest) than bow his Neck to the gracious and rightful Yoke of his Father's Government. And indeed the Life of

a Sinner is so ignominious a Servitude to base and detestable Lusts, and all the Wages of Sin here are such empty and unsatisfying Husks, (such meer Shadows of Pleasure, instead of solid Joys) and the future Wages thereof are so certain deplorable Ruin, that we may well compare his Choice to that of the Prodigal, that sold himself to feed Swine; and had no other Reward for it, than to feed on those Husks that could not preserve him from perishing with Hunger: And yet this the miserable Sinner thinks more eligible, than returning to his heavenly Father. This he thinks better than God's honourable Work and Service; better than his Favour and gracious Acceptance; better than the joyful Prospect and Hope of his eternal Rewards. O the Blindness and Obstinacy of Sinners, whose Hearts are possess'd with so unreasonable a Disinclination to the blessed God, who seem so ready to chuse rather to be miserable in their woful Alienation and Distance from him, than truly happy in their penitent Return to him. But,

III. I farther observ'd, That 'tis for this Reason that a wise God often sees meet to use such severe Methods to awaken and reclaim ungodly, and especially, profligate Sinners.

We see the Prodigal must be brought to Extremities; he must be ready to perish with Hunger, and see no Prospect of any that can, or will minister to his Necessities, before he comes to himself. And this alone brings him to the Consideration of his own Folly.

And thus the wise God often deals with profligate Sinners. He abandons them to the uncontrolled Pursuit of their Lusts: Those soon bring them into grievous Necessities and Straits, plunge them into Distresses and Misery, and bring them to the very Brink of temporal as well as eternal Ruin; and these dismal sensible Effects of their own Folly open their Eyes to see it, and bring them under deep Convictions of it. When they are thus bound in Fetters, and held in Cords of Affliction, (especially of such Affliction as they have visibly brought on themselves, and pull'd the Fetters and Cords off about their own Necks;) then he shews them their Work and their Transgression that they have exceeded. He opens their Ear to Discipline, and commands that they return from Iniquity, Job xxxvi. 8, 9, &c.

Nay, 'tis the usual Method of God, in the Conversion of all ungodly Sinners, to bring them under serious and lively Convictions of those woful Circumstances into which they have plung'd themselves; of their spiritual Distresses and Dangers, of their forlorn and lost Condition, while they continue in a State of Distance and Alienation from him: And this makes them sensible of the absolute Necessity of returning to him. But of that I may have occasion to speak more afterward.

It remains, that we make some Improvement of what has been already spoken: And,

I. Does the Course of every unconverted ungodly Sinner lead to nothing but Misery and Ruin, if his Repentance prevent not? Then let me expostulate with such about the Unreasonableness of their wilful Continuance therein.

Why will you wilfully take such cursed Pains to ruin and undo your selves?

Let me a little plead with you by Arguments drawn from your temporal and your eternal Interest.

Let me plead with you from your temporal Interest.

And truly for such profligate and riotous Persons, as this Prodigal in my Text is represented to be, one would think we should need to use no other Arguments than these, if we had not to do with very stupid and unthinking Creatures. Alas! thou foolish Spendthrift, that art by thy Intemperance and Lust, thy Reveling and Drunkenness, thy Chambering and Wantonness, thy Pride and Luxury, thy Gaming and expensive Sports, spending upon the quick Stock, and by Idleness adding little or nothing to it; how long canst thou expect that this extravagant Life should last? Such costly Vices will soon exhaust thy Fund, and drain thy Coffers. And thou must have very little Sense or Sagacity indeed, if thou

doest not foresee Poverty, at this Rate, coming on thee as one that travels, and want as an armed Man.

The Traveller may seem at some Distance now, but he comes on by sure (tho' sometimes by slower, and sometimes by swifter) Steps, and he will come as an armed Man, against whom thou canst make no Resistance. And what is there in thy brutish Lusts, that thou shouldst thus sacrifice to them thy Estate and Substance, thy Name and Reputation; nay, thy Health and Life it self? Wilt thou for the short and momentary Satisfaction of thy unruly Appetites, entail Poverty and Misery on thy Self or thy Family, bring an indelible Stain on thy Memory, and run the visible Hazard of being a Beggar, or a Jail-Bird? Nay, wilt thou incense a righteous God to expose thee to such temporal Distresses, as a just Punishment of thy riotous Excess? Wilt thou give him so just a Provocation to take away his Corn and Wine, and all his other temporal Blessings which thou hast turned into Fuel to thy extravagant Lusts; and to reduce thee to the want of the least of those daily Mercies which thou now abusest? Consider, miserable Wretch, this jovial Life will not last long: And when so many Lusts bring in so large Items, thou must soon write at the Foot of the Account, All is wasted and spent.

But because this is not altogether the Case of every ungodly Sinner, many of whom (as I suggested) can make a shift so to manage their Vices, that they shall not intrench very deep upon their worldly Interest.

I would therefore plead with every ungodly Sinner from his great and everlasting Interest, which his sinful Course is undoubtedly and apparently pernicious to.

Thy sensual ungodly Life may never, perhaps, bring thee into the Prodigal's Condition; to be a Beggar or a Slave; but it does expose thee to the Hazard of what is infinitely worse. It will impoverish and enslave thy Soul, and endanger its irreparable everlasting Misery and Ruin. And alas, Man, what is there in thy Sins, that will countervail the mischievous Consequences of them! What is there in thy vain, and sensual, and worldly Life, that will compensate the Loss of God's Favour and Love, or bear thee up against the Sense of his awful Displeasure, and the Dread of his terrible Vengeance? What is there in thy impure Lusts, and excessive Sports, and sinful Jollity, that will make amends for the Loss of thy inward Peace; and much more for the secret Challenges and guilty Fears of thy wounded and accusing Conscience (in which the lasting Sting of those sinful Delights remains, which are themselves long since gone and fled?) Nay, what Advantage and Gain is there in all thy Sins, that can countervail for the Loss of Pardon and Forgiveness, of Life and Salvation, of Heaven and its everlasting Glories and Joys? What can the Remembrance of the past momentary Pleasures of Sin signify, to bear thee up under the Anguish and Torments of a never-ending State, under the Darkness and Horrors of everlasting Misery and Despair? And yet this is the woful End to which thy ungodly Course leads; this without Repentance will be the deplorable and remediless Issue of thy vain and brutish Life. O then begin to bethink thy self what thou art doing, and whither thou art going! Consider what thy Ways are, and where they are like to end! Go on no longer blindfold in thy mad Career of Sin! Look to that Precipice and Gulf of endless Perdition that is before thee, and stop thy Feet before thy Paths take hold of Death and Hell. Thou hast already done too much to undo thy self for ever. Thou standest already on the Borders of Hell, and the Brink of Misery. Thy Condition is extremely hazardous, how little soever thou apprehendest it; and without a speedy Repentance, may soon become forlorn and desperate for ever. O then make a seasonable and happy Retreat from the pernicious Paths of Sin, that thou mayst escape the endless Ruin they lead unto! Let the visible Danger of Perishing affright thee from continuing any longer in them.

Consider

Consider what has been already suggested, that there will a time of Anguish and Distress come, in which thou wilt be forc'd to see and lament thy wretched Condition. And O take heed, that it come not too late to prevent thy utter and endless Ruin! 'Tis best now to consider thy Danger, whilst thou hast a Time and Space of Repentance before thee, and thy wretched Case does yet admit of *Remedy* and *Redress*. For alas! If thou now persistest in thy Jollity, and carnal fearless Security, till *Death* and *Judgment* come to give thee the unwelcome Prospect of approaching Misery and Ruin; thou mayst probably see it, but too late to escape it. Thou mayst then find and feel thy self ready to perish, when all the *World* cannot help thee, and when *God* will not. If thou now turn a deaf Ear to his gracious Calls to Repentance, and stifle the present Convictions of thy Danger; time may come, when he'll laugh at thy Calamity, and mock when thy Fear comes, when thou shalt call, but he will not hear, Prov. i. 26, 27, 28. O then consider the miserable Issue of thy sinful Life, while there is now such probable Hope, that it may be happily prevented! But,

II. We may hence also infer the *Wisdom* of the divine Government, that has establish'd such an inseparable Connexion between *Wickedness* and *Misery*.

And indeed, 'tis an illustrious Instance of the divine Wisdom, that he has so fram'd the Nature of Man, and so adapted his Laws thereto, that *Holiness* is to the Soul as its sound and healthful Constitution, and *Sin* its pernicious and mortal Disease. That (setting aside the Case of Persecution) *Holiness* has a real Tendency to promote our present and eternal Happiness, and *Wickedness* is in the genuine Tendency of it, equally pernicious to both. So that the infinitely wise God, has every way made it our Interest to obey his Laws; and we cannot counteract them without the greatest Injury to our selves, as well as Dishonour to him. And indeed, most of those Miseries, to which the Sinner's wicked Course does expose him, are as truly the natural Product and Fruit of his own Sins, as the *Prodigal's* Poverty and Straits were the natural Effect of his riotous Living. So that the Prophet needed not to say any more for confirming the Truth of his awful Denunciation against the Wicked, *Woe to him, it shall be ill with him*; than to add, *For the Reward of his Hands shall be given him*, Isai. iii. 11.

III. Will ungodly Sinners rather bear any Hardships in their wicked Course, than think of returning to God? Let me a little expostulate with such, the Unreasonableness of this their perverse Disaffection to him.

One that had seen the poor *Prodigal*, when he was hiring himself to feed Swine, might have justly said to him; What? Foolish Man! Wilt thou that hast such a Father to go to, with whom thou mayst live so creditably and happily, choose rather to become such a despicable, and such a wretched Slave? What? tho' thou hast greatly offended him, by behaving thy self as an undutiful Child, yet he has not put off the Bowels of a Father, and thou mayst hope that thy humble Confession of thy Faults, that thy Promises of Amendment, that thy Prayers and Tears for Forgiveness, may prevail with him to restore thee to his Favour. At least 'tis thy Wisdom to try this Method first.

So let me, to the like Purpose, expostulate with every unconverted and ungodly Sinner; Why shouldst thou not entertain serious Thoughts of returning to God, when thy continued Departure from him, is like to end in thy Ruin? Thou hast no Reason to be discouraged from it, from the Sense of thy past Provocations, which he is so ready upon thy Repentance to forgive. (Of which more hereafter) Why then dost thou not immediately resolve upon a penitent Return? Wilt thou choose rather to be the Devil's miserable Slave, than to be his accepted beloved Child? Wilt thou prefer the vile Bondage of Sin before his Service, which

is thy truest Freedom! Wilt thou rather feed Swine, than be employ'd in his honourable Work? Is sottish Tipling and Drunkenness, is filthy Lust, is Cards and Dice, or is the mean Drudgery of the World, so much nobler Employment than Reading and Hearing, Prayer and Praise, holy Conference, and heavenly Meditation? Hadst thou rather converse with Brutes, or with profane Sinners that are not much better, than entertain a delightful Communion, not only with the Saints below, but with God, and with Angels, and perfected Spirits above? Wilt thou prefer such contemptible Husks (as all the unsatisfying transitory Pleasures of Sin, or Enjoyments of this World are) before the Feast of a good Conscience, before the rich Consolations of the Spirit of God; and before the ravishing Joys that spring from the assuring Prospect of his consummate Salvation? Shall the Laughter of Fools, shall that carnal Mirth that is like the crackling of Thorns under the Pot, (a sudden Blaze that soon expires) shall this be preferr'd before the Fullness of Joy that is in the Presence of thy heavenly Father; and before those Rivers of Pleasures that are at his right Hand for ever more? What has the blessed God done, that thou art so unaccountably dis-inclined to him, and so insuperably averse to all Thoughts of returning to him? Wilt thou rather choose to perish in a voluntary Departure from him, than to be for ever happy in his restored Favour and Communion? What Iniquity hast thou found in him, that thou art so studious to flee from him? O stand astonished at, and lament over the Perverseness and Obstinacy of thy own Heart, that has hitherto entertain'd so incurable an Aversion to that blessed Being; who, while thou hast been acting as a most rebellious Child, has still yearn'd over thee with the tenderest Bowels of a compassionate Father! And wilt thou rather run upon thy own apparent Destruction, than come back to such an indulgent Father as this?

IV. Does the wise God sometimes use such severe Methods to awaken Sinners to Repentance, O let us see that they prove not ineffectual in any of us, towards whom he uses them.

Have any such foolish *Prodigals* here brought themselves by their riotous Living, to Poverty and Straits, to the hazard of Misery and Ruin in this World? Or at least let these wretched Effects of our own Folly, bring us under deep Convictions of it, and awaken in us serious Resolutions of Repentance; otherwise we shall frustrate the end of God's monitory Rebukes, and defeat his wise and compassionate Methods to reclaim us. And the *Prodigal* in my Text, will rise up in Judgment against us, whom extremity of Want did at last bring to himself. It would be a dreadful Sign of incorrigible Hardness indeed; if like King Abaz we should even in our Distress it self trespass the more; if the Prospect of temporal or of eternal Ruin, will not persuade us to turn our Feet from the Paths of Sin; if the visible Danger of Perishing will not bring us back to our heavenly Father.

But as God is not oblig'd to use this Method with every profligate Sinner, nor does use it with all; it is our greatest Wisdom to prevent the Necessity of it, by a more early and reasonable Conversion to God, that may be rather apparently influenc'd by more ingenuous Motives, than seemingly extorted from us, only when we are reduc'd to the last Extremity. 'Tis more acceptable to be sweetly drawn to him by the Cords of Love, than as it were forcibly driven by Necessity, and a meer Dread of remediless Ruin. 'Tis well indeed if any thing will bring us back to God; but 'tis most commendable and pleasing to be brought to it chiefly by the Sense of our Duty, and the ingenuous Workings of filial Affections, towards our gracious and reconcilable Father, who is so willing to embrace us in his compassionate Arms.

S E R M O N XVIII.

ON

The PARABLE of the Prodigal SON.

LUKE ~~x~~ 17, 18, 19, 20.

- 17 *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired Servants of my Father's have Bread enough, and to spare, and I perish with Hunger!*
 18 *I will arise, and go to my Father, and will say to him; Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.*
 19 *And am no more worthy to be called thy Son, Make me as one of thy hired Servants.*
 20 *And he arose and came to his Father, &c. —*

I Have already gone through two general Branches of this Parable. I have consider'd the Folly of the Prodigal, in his voluntary Departure from his Father; representing to us the greater Folly of perverse Sinners, in their wilful Defection and Estrangement from the blessed God.

I have also consider'd the Misery and Distress, which his riotous way of Living quickly reduc'd him to; representing to us, what the Course of every ungodly licentious Sinner will end in, if serious Repentance prevent it not.

I come now to open to you a more bright and desirable Scene, even to represent to you this straying Prodigal brought back to his Father's House, and meeting with the most welcome Reception upon his penitent Return; in which he is a fit Emblem to us of a licentious Sinner turn'd into a sincere Convert: And in him we may both behold the ingenious Exercises of a true Penitent, in his unfeigned Conversion to God, and the welcome Acceptance he may expect from his heavenly Father.

I shall at present confine my self to the Consideration of the Former; viz. The

III^d. Branch of the Parable, *The prodigal Son's Return to his Father*; representing to us a Sinner's unfeigned Conversion to God.

And when he came to himself, he said, *How many, &c.*

And here several Heads offer themselves to our Observation: As;

First, From the Prodigal's being said to come to himself, when he first entertain'd the Thoughts of returning to his Father; we may observe,

That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course, he acts like a Man besides himself, like a distracted Creature; and then only comes to himself, and to the right Use of his own reasonable Powers, when he entertains the serious Thoughts of returning to God.

Secondly, From the Consideration that first moved the Prodigal to entertain Thoughts of returning to his Father; viz. *That many hired Servants in his Father's House had Bread enough and to spare, while he perished with Hunger*; we may observe,

That usually a Conviction and Sense of their Misery and Danger, does first awaken in such licentious Sinners, the serious Thought of returning to God.

Thirdly, From the Language and Temper of the Prodigal Son; *I will arise and go to my Father, and say, Father, I have sinned, &c.* We may observe,

That the Heart of a penitent Sinner towards God, will work and shew it self, in ingenuous Confessions of his heinous Guilt and great Unworthiness, in dutiful Affection to his offended heavenly Father, and in a sincere readiness to comply with any Terms on which he may be re-admitted to the divine Favour.

Fourthly, From what we read, *That he arose and came to his Father*, we may observe,

That a true Penitent will put his sincere Resolutions of returning to God into speedy Execution.

Of these in their Order.

First, From the Prodigal's being said to come to himself, when he first entertain'd the Thoughts of returning to his Father, we may observe,

That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course, he acts like a Man besides himself, like a distracted Creature; and he then only comes to himself, and to the right Use of his reasonable Powers, when he entertains Thoughts of returning to God.

Here are two Parts of this Observation which I shall distinctly consider. The one imply'd, and presuppos'd; the other more directly asserted.

I. 'Tis here imply'd and presuppos'd; *That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course, he is besides himself, he acts like a poor distracted Creature.*

And truly we cannot easily conceive a more lively Emblem, than a poor distracted Creature is, of a licentious and ungodly Sinner. His whole Life looks like a continu'd Scene of Frenzy and Folly. He acts as if he had no use of his considering Powers, or at least, as if the regular Exercise of them were greatly disturbed.

We reckon a Man distracted, when he acts contrary to the nature of Things, in Matters wherein his own Interest is manifestly concerned; much more when he acts contrary to his own professed Judgment, concerning them, when he does the most apparently absurd Things.

If we see him like the Youth that was possess'd with an unclean Spirit, sometimes running into the Fire, and sometimes into the Water, as if he had no sense of the Mischief he did to himself. Or like the crazed Gadarene that affected to make the Mountains and Tombs his Abode, and there cry'd and cut himself with Stones, and refus'd

to wear any Clothes, Mark ix. 22, &c. Mark v. 5. Luke viii. 27. Should we see such a Man refusing the common Conveniences of Life, doing all the Harm he could to himself, and raging against any one that would endeavour to prevent it, or go about to cure him of his Frenzy; should we see him mad and furious, against those that would take the most tender Care of him that is possible, and requiting their Kindness with nothing but ill Language, and abusive Behaviour; What could we conclude concerning such a Man, but that he is *besides himself*?

And yet this is the real Case of every licentious ungodly Sinner. He acts quite contrary to the nature of Things, nay, usually to his professed Judgment concerning them, in Matters wherein his highest Interest is apparently concern'd: So that his Actions carry upon them all the Marks of stupid Folly; they are manifestly unreasonable and absurd in the last Degree.

And this will easily appear, if we consider how he acts in reference to his Soul and his highest Concerns.

He carries about with him an immortal Spirit, that must survive his corruptible Body in an endless Duration; and yet he acts from Day to Day, as if he expected to dye as well as live like the Beasts that perish. He cannot but know that he must dye, and enter into an unseen eternal World; and yet he makes not the least serious Preparation for Death or for Eternity. There is a God with whom he has infinitely more to do than with all the World besides; and yet there is none that he lives in a more stupid Forgetfulness and Neglect of. Upon this great God he depends every Moment for his Life, and for all the Comforts thereof; and yet there is none to whom he offers greater Affronts and Provocations from Day to Day.

To this gracious God he is infinitely more oblig'd than he is to all the World; and yet there is none that he is less studious to please; none whom he does more to offend and disoblige. He flies from the Service of God which is the truest Liberty, as if it were the most intolerable Bondage; and he's pleas'd with the Devil's Chains and Fetters, as if he enjoy'd the most desirable Freedom. He has the Vengeance of eternal Fire set before him; and yet he boldly plays on the brink of the bottomless Pit; and as it were rushes with his Eyes open on those unquenchable Flames, as if there were no tremendous Danger and Misery in his View. He has the Glories and Joys of an eternal State in his Offer; and yet he slights them as if they were unworthy of his Notice and Consideration; or he wilfully prefers the vain and perishing Enjoyment of this World before them. He barter away that inestimable Pearl for contemptible Trifles, and sacrifices those everlasting Joys to the momentary Pleasures of Sin. He carries about him a Conscience as God's Deputy in his own Bosom; and yet he daily gives it the deepest Wounds, by his deliberate Transgressions, and sows in it the Seeds of Shame and Confusion, of Horror and Despair. He acts as if his Heaven-born Spirit were not of so much Value and Consideration as this Clod of Earth, and as if Time were more to be regarded than Eternity. He carries about him a diseased Soul, but he undervalues the great Physician of Souls. He spurns at his Prescriptions and Remedies, and resists all his compassionate Attempts to heal and cure him. He studiously flees from his own Happiness, and acts as if he were desperately bent upon his own Perdition and Ruin; as if he were resolv'd to undo himself, and that for ever; and took all those for his mortal Enemies who would stop him in his mad Career, and hinder him from executing his pernicious Design. And can we imagine any higher Instances of Distraction and Phrenzy than these? Should we not think any Man besides himself, that should act so absurdly and unreasonably in any Matters that concern his temporal Interest?

'Tis indeed true, that the Sinners Distraction is not Universal; 'tis only a Dementia quoad hoc. He does use his Reason, and often with Sagacity enough in reference to his secular Affairs, and his bodily Interest.

'Tis only in reference to his Soul and eternal Concerns, that he acts as if he had no use of his Understanding, or as if his Thoughts were under the greatest Disorder and Confusion. And this aggravates the Sinner's Guilt, that whereas the Distraction of others is often involuntary, and therefore a Calamity rather than a Crime: His is a voluntary Phrenzy, arising from hence; not that he cannot, but that he will not use his reasonable Powers to consider and prosecute his highest and eternal Concerns.

And to pursue the Parallel no farther. As distracted Persons have sometimes their short lucid Intervals, when they seem for a while to act reasonably; but their Distemper soon returns upon them; so have licentious Sinners under some transient Convictions and Pangs of Conscience their lucid Intervals too, in which they seem to recover some use of their considering Powers. But, alas, these are usually but of short continuance; their Goodness is but as the morning Cloud, and the early Dew that soon goes away! Nay, their sensual Lusts after a short Restraint are often more violent than ever; and hurry them into a greater excess of Riot and Folly.

II. 'Tis here more directly asserted, that Sinners then come to themselves, and the right Use of their reasonable Powers, when they entertain serious Thoughts of returning to God.

And this will appear if we consider, that they then begin to form a right Judgment of Things, and to act agreeably to it; they then begin to act like reasonable and thinking Creatures.

They now begin to discern the excellent Nature and noble Capacities, the invaluable Worth and endless Duration of their own Souls; and how far their higher Interests and Concerns are preferable to those of a perishing Body. And now the Salvation of an immortal Soul is to them the one Thing needful, which they resolve to mind, whatever else be dis-regarded. Now the blessed God appears infinitely great in their Eye; One with whom they have infinitely more to do, and from whom they have infinitely more to hope or to fear than from all the World; so that they are now above all Things solicitous to stand on good Terms with him. They now see so much of the odious Defilement of Sin, and of the dreadful Desert of it; so much of the Beauty of Holiness, and the Desirableness of the divine Favour, as to see their absolute need of a compassionate Saviour, to restore them to the Image and the Love of God, and to renew a League of Amity and Peace between him and them. They now see the Necessity both of God's pardoning Mercy, and renewing Grace, and are anxiously concern'd to seek and obtain it. Now the Things of the future invisible World appear as certain and great, and infinitely momentous Realities in their Eye. Now the Glories of Heaven infinitely out-shine all the Pomp and the vanishing Shows of this Earth. Now the Terrors of Hell appear more formidable than any temporal Evils. Now the Concerns of Eternity, in their practical Judgment, infinitely out-weigh those of Time. These important Objects now appear to them in a clear and convincing Light, as the Objects of Sense did to the Man whose Sight was restored, Mark viii. 23, 24. Their Souls are no longer with reference to these spiritual Objects bound up in a deep Sleep; they are now awake and attentive, and these great Things begin to make their suitable and powerful Impression upon their Minds. They are come to themselves, and begin now to act like thinking Creatures.

And this is all I shall offer on this first Observation. Secondly, From the Consideration that first moved the Prodigal to entertain Thoughts of returning to his Father; viz. That many hired Servants in his Father's House had Bread enough and to spare, while he perish'd with Hunger. We may farther observe,

That 'tis usually a Conviction and Sense of their Misery and Danger, that first awakens in Sinners the serious Thoughts of returning to God.

The Prodigal first saw himself ready to perish, before he would think of coming back to his Father: And so rooted is the Aversion of all, especially of more profligate Sinners to the blessed God, that they rarely think of returning to him, 'till they see an unavoidable Necessity of doing so, or of being miserable for ever. And the more the vicious Habits of corrupt Nature are rivetted and strengthened by a long customary course of Sinning, the more need there is of awful Terrors to reclaim them. Their Consciences are usually so stupid, and they contract such an Insensibleness and spiritual Lethargy, that they need the loudest Alarms of divine Threatnings to awaken them, and usually till they come to see that their present Condition is undone and hopeless, that they are condemn'd already, and that the Wrath of God abides on them, John iii. 18. and ult. That except they repent they must (unavoidably) perish, Luke xiii. 3. 'Till then, all our Counsels and Persuasions are in a great measure lost upon them. They are usually so madly bent upon their Lusts and their sinful Pleasures, that nothing can stop them in their mad Career, but the Flames of eternal Vengeance dash in their Faces. But when once the Sense of their extreme Danger is set home upon their Consciences; when their Guilt in all its Aggravations stares them in the Face; when they see there is but one Step between them and Hell, and that they stand on the very Precipice of the infernal Gulf; when like the Prodigal they are in their own Apprehensions just ready to perish; we may then expect to hear from them such earnest and anxious Enquiries as those of the Jailor, Sirs, *What shall I do to be saved?* Acts xvi. 30. See also Acts ii. 37.

Sometimes indeed God brings Sinners under these deep Convictions, by some awful Methods of his Providence, by deep Afflictions and Distresses, by casting them upon a sick Bed, by holding them over the Grave, and giving them the tremendous View of a near Eternity: But he does it most usually by the Threatnings of his Word, applied to their Consciences. And herein the blessed God is pleas'd to make use of the great Principle of Self-love and Self-preservation, that is so deeply rooted in our Nature. What will not a Man part with, or what will not a Man do or give for the preserving this natural Life? As Satan saith in Job's Case, *Skin for Skin, and all a Man hath, will he give for his Life,* Job ii. 4. What then will not a Man whose Conscience is truly awaken'd forego; or what will he not do or give, to save the more valuable Life of his Soul, and to prevent its being irreparably lost, and that for ever? What will not a Man do to prevent eternal and remediless Destruction? So that if Love to God will not attract, yet Love to our selves should even drive us to him, and excite us to serious Thoughts of a penitent Return. We should argue as the Lepers, *If we stay here we perish. And if we fall into the Hands of the Syrians, we can but dye,* 2 Kings vii. 4. So, if we continue in our Sins, we shall unavoidably perish; and if we must do so, 'tis better to do it at the Feet of our offended Father; and who knows but his Bowels of Pity may yearn towards us, upon our penitent Return to him?

But this leads me to the next Observation, viz.

Thirdly, From the Temper and Language of the prodigal Son; *I will arise and go to my Father, and say, Father I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son, make me as one of thy hired Servants;* we may observe,

That the Heart of a penitent Sinner towards God, will work and shew it self, in ingenuous Confession of his heinous Guilt and great Unworthiness, in dutiful Affection to his offended Father, and in a readiness to comply with any Terms, on which he may be re-admitted to the divine Favour.

So that in the Prodigal's Spirit and Language, we have the genuine Exercises of a truly relenting Soul described unto us: Of which I shall briefly speak.

I. The Heart of a true Penitent will work towards God in the Exercise of filial and dutiful Affection.

I will arise (saith he) and go to my Father. He begins

now to revive the sense of his Father's Authority over him, and Interest in him, and Affection to him, and to feel those Stirrings of natural Affection, which were suitable to his filial Relation.

And thus will it be with every sincere Penitent towards God. 'Tis true indeed, Terror and Fear may first awaken these serious Thoughts in him; but 'tis the Sense of Duty and the Workings of child-like Affection that must bring about a thorough and sincere Conversion. The Sinner must be truly sensible, that his heavenly Father has a just Authority over him, and an entire Propriety in him; nay, he must be able to draw some Encouragement from the Declarations of his gracious Nature, as he has now represented himself in Jesus Christ, reconciling the guilty World to himself, not imputing their Trespases to them. And these Considerations must soften and melt his Heart, into a dutiful and child-like Disposition, in order to his ingenuous and sincere Return to him. He must both be sensible of the Obligations to Duty, which the Relation of a Father lays upon him; and of the Encouragement to hope for Pardon and Pity which it suggests to him; and both must concur to kindle the Sparks of filial and dutiful Love in his Soul. He must think and speak of God as a Father, and be affected towards him as becomes a returning Child. But,

2. The Heart of a true Penitent will work towards God, in the ingenuous Confession of his heinous Guilt and great Unworthiness.

It will be his Language as it was the Prodigal's; *Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.*

Our Repentance would be far from sincere and lasting, if it were only the effect of Terror, if it proceeded only from a dread of Punishment, and not from a due Sense of the Malignity of Sin and just Abhorrence of it. Nor would the blessed God accept of a Sinner that should come to him merely by Constraint and not out of Choice: And therefore, though the Spirit of God in reclaiming a Sinner, may alarm his Conscience, and make his Fear the first Motive to his Repentance; yet he does not leave him there, but proceeds to represent his Folly and Sin, his Ingratitude and Perverseness in all its Aggravations, and then his filial Affection appears in all the Workings of Shame and Sorrow, of just Abhorrence of his Sins, and Indignation against himself for them. Then he is ready to break out in such penitential Confessions as these. "O gracious and compassionate Father! How manifold Affronts have I offered to thy just Authority! And what inexcusable Contempt have I express'd of thy endearing Love! How long have I run from thy House and Family, and from under thy wise Government and thy tender Care! How long have I wasted all the Talents and Time thou hast entrusted me with, in riotous Living! How long have I cast thy Commands behind my Back, and trampled on thy Laws, and despis'd thy Counsels, and chosen rather to follow the Suggestions of Satan, the Dictates of the Flesh, and the corrupt Maxims of this sinful World! And O with what a stupid and perverse Ingratitude have I turn'd a deaf Ear to all thy compassionate Calls to return, and slighted thine alluring Offers of Pardon and Peace, of Adoption into thy Family, and of a Right to thy heavenly Inheritance! And now, Lord, I must own my self unworthy to be called thy Son; so that if thou refusest to receive me into thy Family, and to restore me to the Privileges of thy Children, I must acknowledge the Equity of thy Sentence, and lye down in Shame and Confusion, speechless before Thee.

With such a deep Detestation of his Sins; with such Abhorrence of his Perverseness and Ingratitude; with such abasing Thoughts of his own Vileness and Misdeeds, will a true Penitent return to his offended Father and Lord: With such Confusion and Remorse and Self-loathing, will he prostrate himself at his Feet. Those Sins that before he made a light Matter of, nay, perhaps could glory in, he now stands astonish'd at his own Folly in the Commission of,

he now blushes at the Remembrance of them, and cannot review them without deep Indignation against himself, and a humbling Sense of his grievous Demerit. Nay,

3. *The Heart of a true Penitent will work towards God, in a Readiness to comply with any Terms on which he may be re-admitted to his Favour.*

Make me (saith the Prodigal) *as one of thy hired Servants*, q. d. I now see, that the Condition of one of the meanest of thy Servants, is far happier than mine; and I would rather stoop to the lowest Office, than remain any longer a miserable Exile from thy House.

Thus will a convinced and relenting Sinner, accept of divine Favour and Mercy, upon any Terms whatsoever. He reckons it such an Honour and Happiness to be receiv'd into God's Family, and into the Number of his adopted Children, that he makes no Exceptions against any of his just Proposals. He does not come with Reserves and Limitations of this or that Self-denying, or difficult or expensive Duty and Service that he would be exempted from; or of the Liberty he must be indulged to gratify this or that profitable or pleasing Sin: No, he is ready to say with the penitent Saul upon his Conversion, *Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do?* Acts ix. 6.

There is no beloved Lust but what he is now willing to renounce, tho' it may have been to him as dear as a right Hand, or a right Eye. There is no Duty how displeasing soever to the Flesh, but what he is now willing to engage in. He thinks it now most reasonable and just, that God's rightful Yoke should be submitted to, that his Conditions of Peace be accepted, and that he should return to a State of dutiful Subjection to him, as his sovereign Ruler and Lord; and he begs that the Grace of God would write his Laws in his Heart, and mould his Will into an entire Agreement with the Divine. In a Word, he is heartily willing to be re-admitted into the Family and Favour of God, upon any Terms whatsoever. If it be too great an Honour to be a Son, he is willing to be as an hired Servant in his House.

In such genuine Exercises as these, does the Heart of a penitent Sinner work towards God. With such a filial Temper and Disposition does he return to him.

But I proceed to the next Observation.

Fourthly, From what we read of the prodigal Son's arising and coming to his Father; we may observe,

That a true Penitent will put his Resolutions of returning to God into speedy Execution.

The Prodigal having resolv'd the Matter in his own deliberate Thoughts, he delays not, but immediately arises and goes to his Father.

And agreeable hereto will the Practice of a sincere Penitent be; his Convictions will produce a sincere Resolution of returning to God, and he will not delay the putting his holy Purpose in Execution.

1. *His Convictions will produce a sincere Resolution of returning to God.*

He will not stifle the Convictions of his own awakened Conscience, nor quench the Motions of the Spirit of God. He will debate this important Matter with himself, till he has brought his Soul to a fixed Determination that he will come back to his heavenly Father, and cast himself into his compassionate Arms, with unfeigned Protestations and Vows of future Duty and Obedience. And indeed, all those Convictions and Terrors are like to fall short of sincere Conversion that leave our Minds wavering, and our Wills unresolved. All those Pangs will fall short of the New-birth, that do not turn the prevalent Bent of the Heart towards God. The Prodigal's Heart was then gain'd, when he said, *I will arise and go to my Father.*

2. *A true Penitent will not delay to put his holy Purpose of returning to God in Execution.*

He will (as the Prodigal) immediately arise and go.

Alas, those slight Purposes of repenting hereafter, which so many put off the present Convictions of Conscience

with, are never sincere, and therefore like to prove abortive! And alas, how many seeming Penitents are there that fatally miscarry, by suffering their good Purposes to languish and dye, by delaying the great Work of Repentance, tho' convinc'd of the Necessity of it, by putting these Matters off, as *Felix* to a (pretendedly) more convenient Season! And alas, how does the Goodness of such prove only as the Morning Cloud, and the early Dew, that soon goes away! The Morning Cloud promis'd a seasonable Shower, and the early Dew gave some hope of refreshing the Earth, and making it fruitful: But the Cloud soon scatters and vanishes, and the Dew is quickly dried up. And so do the fair Hopes of the Sinner's Reformation vanish, when his Resolutions unbend, and the Execution of them is deferr'd to an uncertain Hereafter.

But a true Penitent is restless till he actually return to God. He not only sees the absolute Necessity of it, but is fully convinc'd he can never return too soon, nor can without extreme Hazard and Folly defer it any longer. He therefore immediately upon the Review of his Ways, turns his Feet to God's Testimonies; He makes haste and delays not to keep his Commands, Psal. cxix. 59, 60.

When I say he returns to God, I mean, that he returns to him as his absolute Owner, resigning himself to his Disposal, and devoting his All to his Interest and Service. He returns to him as his rightful King and Lord, subjecting his Heart and Life to his Authority and Laws. He returns to him as his gracious Benefactor, and the Object of his final Happiness, with a sincere Disposition to love him above all, and to seek his final satisfying Blessedness in his eternal Favour and Love. He returns to him as his reconciled Father, whom he will honour and glorify as his merciful Redeemer and Saviour, whom he will trust and obey; as his Sanctifier, to whose Conduct and Government he resigns himself. And he renounces whatever is inconsistent with his Duty to the blessed God, and with his regular Hopes of eternal Happiness in him.

And this he does immediately without Delay, he puts it not off to another Time.

It remains that we improve what has been said. And all the Use I shall here make of the foregoing Observations is only to urge upon Sinners this necessary Duty of a penitent Return and Conversion to God. And for that End, to propose what the foregoing Observations suggest, by way of Direction and Motive.

First, I would urge upon all impenitent ungodly Sinners, this necessary and important Duty of a sincere Return and Conversion to God.

And O that every poor Prodigal here would this Day take up this solemn Purpose in my Text, *I will arise and go to my Father*, and put it in immediate Execution!

You have too long alienated your selves from the blessed God: O now return to him as your absolute Owner. Let it be the Language of your Souls; "Blessed Lord, I now freely own thy absolute Propriety and Interest in me, and in all that I am and have, and will henceforth live as thine, and not as my own. The Faculties of my Soul, and Members of my Body, I offer as a living Sacrifice to thee, to be employ'd in thy faithful perpetual Service. To Thee shall all my Talents and Time be devoted. And to thy providential Disposal I freely resign my self and all my Concerns."

You have too long revolted from God; O return to him as your rightful Ruler and Lord. Let it be your sincere Language: "Thee, Lord, I avouch for my heavenly Sovereign; to Thee I swear all Fidelity and Allegiance; to thy Authority and Laws I subject my Heart and Life; thy Service I embrace as my truest Freedom; and to do thy Will on Earth as 'tis done in Heaven, shall be the Business and Pleasure of my Life."

You have too long forsaken the Blessed God: O now return to him as your sovereign Good. Let it be the

the sincere Language of your Souls. "Thou, Lord, art my entire Benefactor, and the only Fountain of all my Happiness. Thou art alone my everlasting and satisfying Portion. Thy loving Kindness is better than Life, Psal. lxxiii. 3. In thy immediate eternal Presence alone is Fulness of Joy; and at thy right Hand are Pleasures for evermore, Psal. xvi. ult. Thou alone art the Object of my ardent Desires and highest Delight. In the Fruition of Thee (the

"Spring of Light, and Life, and Joy) does my Soul expect its everlasting Content and Rest. All Creatures are to me but broken Cisterns; thou alone art the Fountain of living Waters.

Having thus exhorted you to return to God, I should enforce the Exhortation with such Directions and Motives as the foregoing Observations suggest. But that I shall reserve to the next Discourse.

S E R M O N XIX.

ON

The PARABLE of the Prodigal SON.

LUKE XV. 17, 18, 19, 20.

- 17 And when he came to himself, he said; How many hired Servants of my Father's have Bread enough and to spare, and I perish with Hunger!
- 18 I will arise and go to my Father, and will say to him; Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before thee.
- 19 And am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son, Make me as one of thy hired Servants.
- 20 And he arose and came to his Father, &c. —



ENTER'D in the former Discourse, on the Third Branch of the Parable; viz.

III. The prodigal Son's Return to his Father, representing to us a Sinner's unfeigned Conversion to God.

And in this Branch of the Parable, several Things were observed: As,

First, That while a Sinner continues in his licentious Course, he acts like a Man besides himself, and then only comes to himself, and to the right Use of his own reasonable Powers, when he entertains serious Thoughts of returning to God.

Secondly, 'Tis usually a Sense and Conviction of their Misery and Danger, that first awakens in such licentious Sinners the serious Thoughts of returning to God.

Thirdly, That the Heart of a penitent Sinner will work towards God, in the Exercise of filial and dutiful Affection, in the ingenuous Confession of his heinous Guilt, and great Unworthiness, and in a readiness to comply with any Terms on which he may be re-admitted to his Favour. And,

Fourthly, That a true Penitent will put his Resolutions of returning to God, into speedy Execution.

I have already spoken to each of these Heads.

In the Application thereof I propos'd,

First, To urge upon every ungodly Sinner this necessary Duty of a penitent Return and Conversion to God.

Secondly, To propose for that End such Directions and Motives as the foregoing Heads do suggest.

I have already insisted on the former Head; and now proceed,

Secondly, To enforce my Exhortation to this necessary Duty with such Directions and Motives as the foregoing Heads do suggest.

By way of Direction in our penitent Return to God, we may consider the following Advices, as suggested to us by the foregoing Heads: As,

I. That in order to our effectual Conversion and penitent Return to God, we must begin to use, our considering Powers in the Concerns of our Souls and of Eternity.

For since the Impenitency of a Sinner is the Effect of a voluntary Distraction; and that while he runs from God, he is as a Man besides himself: We may infer on the contrary, that if Sinners would once come to themselves, by the serious Exercise of their Reason and Consideration, about their spiritual Concerns, we should have great Hopes of their being brought back to God. For we have their Reason and Conscience on our Side, whenever they entertain any sober and serious Thoughts, and attend to the Dictates of that Monitor in their own Breasts. And we have those Arguments to offer them, drawn from their indispensable Duty, from their own apparent Advantage and Interest, and from the Obligations of Gratitude and Love, that would prevail with them (by the Concurrence of divine Grace) if they were often and impartially weigh'd. And we are sure that there is nothing reasonable that can be objected against their penitent Return to God. If either the Danger of extreme and remediless Misery that will be the certain Issue of their final Impenitency can awaken and alarm them, or if the Reasonableness and Excellency of the Service of God can invite them to it, or if the high Honour and inestimable Privileges of the adopted Children of God can allure them to return to his Family; or if the Prospect and Hope of an eternal Inheritance can win and gain their Hearts: Or if the highest Obligations of infinite Mercy can melt them, or the strongest Cords of divine Love draw them, we have all this and much more to propose to them. And these are Arguments that seem to carry an irresistible Force to those that will but deliberately ponder them, and would probably prevail with them in any other Case. But alas, how usually do all these Arguments lose their Force, and prove ineffectual to persuade them, thro' their stupid and wilful Inconsideration! And 'tis no wonder that the wisest Charmer cannot charm those whose Ears are as much stop'd to his Voice, as those of the deaf Adder, Psal. lxxiii. 5. O then begin to shake off that unthinking and careless Humour you have hitherto cherish'd! Begin to use those reasonable Powers in the Concerns

of your Souls, and their everlasting Interest, which you can so readily employ about any lower Affairs. Act no longer in such Matters of infinite Moment and Consequence, like *distracted inconsiderate Creatures*.

O begin to bethink your selves what Advantage or Benefit you have ever gain'd by your voluntary Departure from God, and what you can reasonably expect your licentious Course will end in; examine the Justice and Equity of that Claim he lays to you, and to your utmost Obedience and Service; impartially consider the merciful Offers he makes to returning Penitents, and see whether they be not worthy of your thankful Acceptance; ponder the present invaluable Privileges of the Children of God, and their much greater Hopes and Expectations, and then act as your unprejudic'd Reason and Conscience will advise. If upon this impartial View, thy Conscience tells thee, that the Devil and thy Lusts have a juster Title to thy Service than God; that their Service is more reasonable and excellent than his; that his great and precious Promises are out-bid by their Offers, and that their Wages are preferable to his eternal Rewards, then go on in thy voluntary Defection from God, and see what will be the End of it. But if thy Conscience tell thee quite contrary, that God alone has the just Claim to thy Heart and Life, while Satan and Sin are vile Usurpers; that his Service alone is the most honourable Liberty, but theirs the most ignominious Vassalage; that their Wages are Death and Misery, Ruin and Despair; his Rewards infinitely glorious and great, as well as durable and permanent; that their most specious Offers are both delusive in themselves, and infinitely out-weigh'd by his glorious Promises: O resolve then to choose and act as becomes a reasonable Creature that is unwilling to have a fatal Cheat impos'd on thy self in a Matter of infinite Moment and Consequence! Use that Sagacity and Wisdom, that impartial and deep Consideration in this Case that thou wouldst in any other that concerns thy bodily Life, and the momentary Interests thereof.

And, O that I could gain thus far upon every impenitent Sinner, to persuade him to retire, and to take these Matters into his most serious Thoughts! Even this would be a very hopeful Step towards his sincere Conversion; if he would but once set himself to think on his own Ways, we might have some comfortable Expectation, that he would turn his Feet to God's Testimonies, Psal. cxix. 59. And, I am sure, that Man is wholly inexcusable that will not do thus much towards his own Conversion.

II. Do not cease your serious Thoughts about these Matters, till you have brought your Souls to a fixed Determination, that you will return to God.

You see the Prodigal, when he came to himself, reason'd the Case with himself, 'till he came to a Resolution in the Point, that he would arise and go to his Father.

And thus shou'd we, when we have this important Matter under our serious Consideration, bring it to an issue; and come to a fixed Choice and Resolution what we will do. For nothing can be more absurd and unreasonable, than to continue unresolv'd and wavering in a Matter of so unspeakable Importance as this is. Alas, Man, thy Soul and thy everlasting Interest is at stake! and these are not Matters to be dallied with, or left to doubtful Uncertainties. The great God on the one Hand, and Satan and Sin on the other, claim thy Heart and thy Life; and 'tis fit thou shou'dst come to a settled Resolution, to whether of these thou wilt give the Possession of the one, and the Use and Service of the other. O beware of stifling thy present Convictions, and of putting off the Remonstrances and Pleadings of the Spirit of God and of thy own Conscience to another hearing! Say not to 'em as trembling Felix, under the uneasy Pangs of an alarmed Conscience, did to Paul, Go thy way now, and when I have a more convenient Season I will call for thee, Acts xxiv. 25. No, the unconceivable Importance of the Case requires a present and speedy Decision. Thou canst have nothing

before thee of greater Moment, and wherein 'tis more needful to come to a Determination: And sure it shou'd, with a reasonable Soul, need no long Deliberation to come to a Resolution and Choice in so plain a Case as this. What! is it so doubtful a Matter, whether a Prodigal that is ready to perish shou'd return to his Father! Whether an ungodly Sinner that is under a Sentence of Death and Condemnation, and walks every Day and Hour on the brink of Eternal Perdition, shou'd come back and throw himself into the compassionate Arms of a reconcilable, tho' offended God and Father? Shou'd not a bare Consideration of the indispensable Necessity of it, to prevent his own endless Ruin, easily and quickly resolve an awakened Sinner what to do! Shou'd not even the Terrors of the Lord effectually persuade and drive him to Repentance! 2 Cor. v. 11. Shou'd the Choice appear difficult, when Blessing and Cursing, everlasting Life or Death are set before us! Is it so doubtful, whether God or Satan have the more undoubted Right to us? Whether the Bondage of the Devil's Slaves, or the Liberty of the Children of God be more desirable? Whether the Paths of Death and Hell, or those of Life be more safe and eligible? Whether the Wages of Sin, or the Rewards of Holiness be preferable? Whether the Considerations of Duty and Gratitude, and Interest by which we shou'd be sway'd, lye on God's side, or on that of Satan and Sin? I say, are these so dubious Matters that we find it hard to know what Resolution we shou'd come to? Or rather, is not the Cause of God so clear, so certain, and so indisputable, as should soon bring us to the happy Decision and Purpose of the Prodigal in my Text, That we will arise and go to our Father, That we will change our Master and our Service; that we will renounce the vile and pernicious Bondage of Satan and our own Lusts, and make a seasonable Retreat from the Paths of Sin and Death; and that we will return to our rightful Owner, Lord, and Benefactor, and will engage in his just, his honourable and advantageous Service; and now turn our Feet to those Ways of Divine Wisdom, that are Ways of Pleasance, and Paths of Peace! O let us then pursue our serious Thoughts about these Matters, and fix our Minds on the attentive Consideration of such moving Arguments, till we find our Judgments fully convinc'd, That to return to God is our unquestionable Duty, and highest Interest; and 'till our Wills are brought to a fixed Resolution about it, let us by no means leave a Matter of such awful Consequence doubtful and undetermin'd.

Supposing then that you are brought to a settled Purpose and Choice of returning to God. I add,

III. That you shou'd imitate this relenting Prodigal both in the manner and time of your Return to him.

First, You should imitate him in the time of your Return to God.

He did it immediately, and without Delay; he put his good Resolutions into speedy Execution; he no sooner had come to a Determination with himself, but he arose and came to his Father.

So must we put our Purposes of sincere Repentance into speedy Execution. We must beware of deferring that necessary Work to another Time, and putting it off to an uncertain Hereafter: For this is one of the most successful Artifices the Devil uses to elude the Force of Men's Convictions, and render their Purposes of Repentance and Conversion ineffectual and abortive. When they are convinc'd that there is a Necessity of returning to God; yet he persuades them there is time enough for doing that, that they may enjoy the Pleasures of Sin a little longer, or bring their worldly Affairs to a better Settlement; and then they will have more Inclination and more Leisure for the exercise of Repentance; that they need not be over-hasty in that Matter, since Youth is the proper Season for Jollity and Mirth, and the World is now before them, and 'tis time enough to think of those things when Sicknes or Age come upon them. This Stratagem of the Devil being so common and so successful, there is the greater need of forewarning you of it, and forearming you against it.

it. Accordingly, we shou'd, whilst it is call'd to day, hearken to his Voice and Call to Repentance; we shou'd not put it off one Day longer.

And that I may excite you to such an early speed in your Returning to God, I shall enforce this Direction with a few Motives: As,

1. Consider, That the same Arguments that should persuade you to return to God at all, shou'd induce you to return now presently and without delay.

Do you resolve to return to God some time or other, because 'tis your indispensable Duty? And is it not your Duty now? Does he not require you to seek him early? Does he not claim the whole of your Life and Time to be devoted to his Service? Are not all your Delays inexcusably sinful? Do you not most unjustly and unthankfully alienate all that part of your Life from him which you spend in Folly and Vanity, in the Service of the Flesh or the World? So that if God's Authority and Command, his Call and Claim, have any weight with you, 'tis as urgent a Motive to return now as ever it will be; and therefore as likely to prevail now as ever.

Again, Do you resolve upon a sincere Conversion to God, because you think his Service preferable to that of Satan and Sin? And should not that Argument induce you to return immediately? What are you afraid of being too soon freed from the Chains of Satan, and the ignominious Fetters of your own Lusts? Are you afraid of being restor'd to the desirable Liberty of the Children of God too soon? Who would not embrace the first Occasion of exchanging an unjust Usurper and Tyrant, for a rightful and gracious Lord; and a rigorous pernicious Servitude, for an easy Yoke and light Burden?

Again, Do you resolve to return to God, because you apprehend there is an absolute Necessity of such a Conversion to your Eternal Salvation? And shou'd not this Argument plead strongly for a speedy Repentance, and against all tedious Delays? Can you be too hasty in fleeing from the Wrath to come? Can you escape everlasting and remediless Ruin too soon? Can you be too early in obtaining the Favour of a reconciled God, and in securing your Pardon and Acceptance with him thro' Jesus Christ? Can you make too much haste to be happy for ever? Can you flee from the Paths of Hell and Destruction, and enter into the strait way that leads to eternal Life too soon? Or rather, should not these momentous Consequences of a sincere Conversion to God, represent the most early Speed in it, as most reasonable and prudent, and the contrary Delay as most inexcusable? Should not this Argument put you on making haste, and not delaying to keep God's Commandments? Psal. cxix. 60.

Nay, Is the Goodness and Patience of God a just Motive to Repentance? 'Tis also as forcible and cogent an one to promote an early and speedy Repentance; because all your tedious Delays of it do abuse that infinite Goodness and Patience of his; and do wretchedly pervert the great Design of it.

In a Word, Whatever Arguments prove it necessary you should return to God at all, do represent it as most reasonable, that you shou'd return immediately; and do condemn your Folly in deferring it to another distant Season. But,

2. Consider, That all such Delays of Repentance and Return to God are extremely hazardous.

And this will appear, if you consider the following Particulars.

1. There is great hazard lest Death should prevent you.

I hope none of you are so vain as to think, that you have any certain Lease of your future Life, and can promise your selves many Years yet to come. Common Experience so fully shews us the utter Uncertainty of the Life of Man; we see it expos'd to so many thousand Accidents that could neither be foreseen nor prevented; we behold so many thousand Instances of human Frailty in those that were young; nay, in

those that seem'd to have the firmest Constitution, that it were the most inexcusable Folly to think our selves, for any long time to come, from the hazard of Death. Alas! Death lies in Ambush against us in every Vein and Nerve; the Seeds of Mortality are sown in every part of our Bodies, and often break out with an irresistible and sudden Violence. Sometimes Death seizes upon us with such a quick Surprise, as gives us no warning of its Approach; and no leisure to prepare for it. We are often suddenly carried down the stream of Time, and launch'd into Eternity before we know where we are: And very usually Sickness it self reduces us into a Condition in which we are unfit to manage any important Affair at all; and much more one of so infinite Moment as this of our Conversion to God is, which requires the intensest Application of a compos'd Mind, and the deepest Exercise of our serious undisturbed Thoughts. And shall we then, by delaying our Repentance, expose our Souls and their everlasting Concerns to such miserable Hazards and Uncertainties as these? Shall we dare to go on in that impenitent ungodly Course, in which we are not sure but a sudden Death may this Day surprize us; but are sure that if it do, our Case is hopeless and desperate for ever? Is it fit for us to dally and trifle about that necessary Work on which our Salvation depends, while we every Day tread on the Brink of an awful Eternity? Many thousands have been thus betrayed into sudden and endless Perdition, by depending on the vain Purposes of a future Repentance. And shou'd we not dread least this shou'd prove our Case? Nay, shall we every Day, every Hour run the foolish risque of it? Is the Safety and Welfare of our immortal Souls the only thing we can find to put upon so mad and desperate an Adventure as this?

2. There is no less Hazard lest our Purposes of Repentance prove abortive and ineffectual, through our deferring the Execution of them.

'Tis highly probable that our Resolutions of returning to God, if we wilfully adjourn that great Work, will gradually unbend. Our Convictions, if not now follow'd on to a sincere Conversion, will probably wear off, and we shall lose the serious Impression of them. Those languid Sparks, if not blown up into a vital Flame, will probably expire and dye. Our Corruptions after a short Restraint and Check will grow more strong and violent, more rooted and fix'd than before, by thus baffling our present Convictions and Purposes. And if we will not now hearken while 'tis call'd to Day, there is great Danger lest we should be hardned through the Deceitfulness of Sin, Heb. iii. 13. The longer we defer our Repentance, it becomes the more difficult and the more improbable. Our Lusts are more confirm'd by a customary Course of Sinning; our Consciences become the more sear'd and insensible, by our so frequently counteracting their Light, and silencing their Clamours and Reproofs: So that by wilfully delaying our Repentance, we run the hazard of contracting a fatal Obdurateness in Sin; and of bringing our selves into the deplorable Case of those, whose Conversion to God and Holiness the Prophet represents to be as unlikely, as for the Ethiopian to change his Skin, and the Leopard his Spots, Jer. xiii. 23. And alas, many thousands of such there are in the World, who once seem'd to be in a hopeful way for Conversion, but who by their wretched Delays of it, have soon shew'd, that their Goodness was but as the morning Cloud, and the early Dew that soon goes away, Hos. vi. 4. Their good Purposes have soon vanish'd; their Corruptions by trampling on them have regain'd and increas'd their Strength; Satan after a seeming Expulsion has return'd and taken more full Possession of them; so that they have return'd with the Dog to his Vomit, and with the Sow that was wash'd to her wallowing in the Mire, 2 Pet. ii. 22. And shall we by deferring our Repentance, run such an apparent Hazard, of becoming gradually hardned in Sin to our utter Perdition?

Especially if we consider, that besides the natural Tendency of our continuance in Sin, to our being hard-

ned therein, there is no less Danger least a provoked God gives us up to the Hardness of our own Hearts, and suspend the Influences of his forfeited Grace. We may justly fear least his holy Spirit should depart from us, when we have long griev'd him by our perverse Resistance; least he should not renew those Conversions we have stifled; and repeat those gracious Motions which we have quench'd, and revive those Resolutions which we have delay'd the Execution of. We may justly fear least an offended God should resolve, That his holy Spirit shall strive no more with us; least he should say to the Unjust and the Filthy, Let him be so still, Rev. xxii. 11. Or say of us as once of Ephraim, He is joined to his Idols (to his Lusts) let him alone, Hos. iv. 17. And shall we dare to run such a Hazard of final Rejection by God, of being given up by him to a reprobate Mind, and to an obdurate Heart?

Once more.

3. There is great Hazard if we now wilfully delay our Repentance, least our Application to God for Pardon and Acceptance should come too late.

God therefore requires our early Return and Conversion to him, because the whole of our Life is due to him, and should be employ'd in his Service. Now if we by wilfully deferring our Repentance, sacrifice the Flower and Vigour of our Age to Satan and our Lusts; what reason have we to expect that God will accept the Refuse and Dregs of our Age? Alas, with what hope can a dying Man offer such Petitions as these, "Lord! Now receive me, though I would not think of returning to thee, till the last Gasps! Now make me an Object of thy sovereign Mercy, though I have all my Life dally'd with the Offers of it, and come only to implore it with my dying Breath! I have liv'd the Life of the Wicked, but O let me dye the Death of the Righteous, and let my last End be like his! Numb. xxiii. 10. O with what anxious Fear and Trembling must such a dying Person consider that awful Threatning, Because I have call'd and ye have refused; I have stretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my Counsel, and would have none of my Reproof; I also will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear comes, &c. Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; They shall seek me early, but shall not find me, Prov. i. 24—29. If you think God's Calls to Repentance come too soon for you to comply with them; beware least your Calls for Mercy come not too late for him to hear. O then defer your Conversion to him no longer, seek him now while he may be found, and call upon him while he is (in the Offers of his Mercy, and the Assistances of his Spirit and Grace) near to you, Isa. lv. 6. Nay to add no more.

3. Consider, That your pretended Purposes of Repenting hereafter, are meer Hypocrisy and Self-delusion.

For what is the genuine Language of them but this, "as if you should say, "I will at present go on in my sinful Course, but I hope and purpose some time or other, to be extremely sorry that ever I did so; I will at present persist in my voluntary Departure from God, but I design some time hereafter to be heartily griev'd for it, and shall be ready to give all the World, were it in my Power, that I never had done it.

Now 'tis evident that such pretended Purposes of future Repentance as these, are but gross Dissimulation. The Purposes of Sinning now, and Repenting hereafter, are inconsistent and self-contradictory. So that Men do by such vain Purposes both mock God, and impose a fatal Delusion on their own Souls.

O let me then prevail with every convinced Sinner here, to put his Resolutions of Repentance into speedy Execution! Let this be the Day and the accepted Time for thy returning to God. Now give him the Possession of thy Heart, and devote to him the Service of thy Life. Now enter into his House and Family, own his Propriety and Interest in thee; subject thy self to his rightful Authority; and seek thy Happiness in his Favour and Love. O seek him early, for he has promis'd, That

such shall find him, Prov. viii. 17. Look on all that part of thy Life and Time as lost, that has been alienated from him: O consecrate to him the Remainder of it; let not Satan by any Pretence tempt thee to delay a Work of so absolute Necessity, and so unspeakable Moment. But,

Secondly, We should imitate this Prodigal in the manner of our returning to God: As,

1. See that your Return to God spring from filial Affection and Love to him.

Revive in your Souls the just Sense of his Authority, as he is your Father; and of the Duty you owe to him as you are his Children: For there is such a Relation which God bears in common to all. He is the Father of Spirits, Heb. xii. 9. And we are his Off-spring, Acts xvii. 28. But you are his Children, not only as you are the Work of his Hands, but as you are a part of his visible Household and Family. But especially let the Contemplation of his infinite and marvellous Love (express'd in his entertaining Thoughts of Reconciliation and Peace towards you; in his giving his own Son to be your Propitiation; in extending his Arms to embrace even such undutiful Prodigals as you have been) melt your Souls into all ingenuous and grateful Affection towards him. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more, when I come to consider the welcome Entertainment which the returning Prodigal met with.

Therefore,

2. See also, That you return to God with a penitent Sense, and Acknowledgment of your heinous Guilt and great Unworthiness.

And O with what Shame and Confusion of Face; With what self-reproaching and self-condemning Thoughts should we come back to our heavenly Father, who are conscious to our selves, in how innumerable Instances we have offended and griev'd him, and provok'd the Eyes of his Glory! How should we blush when we reflect upon all the Impurities and Pollutions of our Hearts and Lives, of our Thoughts and Desires, our Words and Actions! How should we be confounded in the Sense of all our Madness and Folly, all our Forgetfulness and Neglect of God, all our shameful Ingratitude towards him; all our perverse Contempt of his Authority and his Commands! With what Indignation and Self-loathing should it fill us to think with what a daring Insolence we have violated his Laws, and provok'd his Justice; and especially with how stupid Obstinacy and Unthankfulness we have spurn'd at the Bowels of his Love, and slighted the compassionate Offers of it, neglected the great Salvation, and despis'd the merciful Author of it! How should we in remembrance of all our Guilt, and all the sad Aggravations thereof, with the poor Publican, be ashamed to lift up our Faces to Heaven, (against which we have sinn'd) and in deep Compunction smite upon our Breasts, and in great Anguish of Soul cry out, Lord be merciful to me a Sinner, (to me that infinitely need thy Mercy, though most unworthy to partake of it!) Luke xviii. 13. How ready should we be in the deepest Abasement of Soul, to justify the Severity of God, should he reject us for ever; and to resent it as an Act of marvellous transcendent Mercy and Grace, if he should receive such as we are into the Number of his reconciled and adopted Children, who have deserv'd the Treatment of Enemies and Rebels at his Hand!

And truly the more we feel of such Humility and Dejection, such Remorse and Self-abhorrence in our Return to God; the more we are dispos'd to set a due value on the Riches of divine Grace, in our Pardon and Acceptance; the more shall we be affected with the matchless Clemency and Pity of our heavenly Father, that opens his compassionate Arms to receive us; and the more shall we feel our Hearts inflam'd with dutiful and grateful Affection towards him. And indeed it would argue great Ignorance either of the spotless Holiness and tremendous Justice of that glorious Majesty, to whom we profess to return, or of our own Guilt and the Aggravations thereof, should we come back to him in any other Frame, than that of penitential Shame and

Sorrow,

Sorrow, Self-loathing and Self-judging. And 'tis such a Penitent that is a fit Object to move the Bowels of divine Pity. He will not upbraid us with those Follies with which we thus upbraid our selves. He will not abhor us when we thus abhor our selves; we shall be pleasing in his Eyes, when we are thus vile in our own; and when we thus penitently judge our selves, we shall not be judged in a way of Rigour and Severity by him, 1 Cor. xi. 37. But,

3. Let us see that we return to God with a sincere Willingness to comply with any Terms of Mercy whatsoever.

And sure if we have any due Sense of our own wretched and perishing Condition, while we are in a state of Enmity and Estrangement from God, if we understand how high an Honour, and unspeakable an Advantage it is, to be adopted into his Family, and own'd as his Children, we shall never think any Conditions of our Interest in such inestimable Privileges too

hard; much less shall we think so of such gracious and condescending ones, as the Gospel propounds. O let us then be freely willing to abandon every darling Lust, to give every Sin a Bill of perpetual Divorce; let us freely submit to the Authority, and engage in the Service of our heavenly Father; let us resolve to live to him, to obey him, and to seek our final Happiness in him: Let us enter into his Family, voluntarily come under his Government and Conduct, and decline no part of our Duty, whatever Difficulty or Self-denial, or Hazard may attend our faithful Discharge of it. We should be even ready to subscribe a Blank, and leave it to him to set down what Conditions he pleases. We should entirely devote and give up our selves to him, without any Limitations and Reserves, as being fully persuaded, we are never more happily our own than when we are most absolutely his.

S E R M O N XX.

O N

The P A R A B L E of the Prodigal S O N.

LUKE XV. 20, 21, 22, 23, 24.

- 20 And he arose and came to his Father. But when he was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had Compassion, and ran, and fell on his Neck, and kissed him.
21 And the Son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son.
22 But the Father said to his Servants, Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his Feet, &c. —

HAVING trac'd the Prodigal in his voluntary Departure from his Father, and represented to you the miserable and wretched Condition into which his Folly and riotous Course of living had brought him; I did in the two last Discourses open to you a more bright and desirable Scene; and represented this foolish Prodigal at last coming to himself, lamenting his Folly and Misery, entertaining serious Resolutions of returning to his Father (and that with all dutiful Affection, with a penitent Acknowledgment of his past Guilt, with a sincere Readiness to comply with any Terms on which he might be re-admitted to Favour) and what is most considerable, putting those good Resolutions without any delay into speedy Execution. And in all these Particulars I propos'd him as a fit Pattern for the Imitation of every convinc'd and relenting Sinner in his penitent Return to God. I proceed now to the

IVth Branch of the Parable, viz. To consider the welcome Reception which the Prodigal met with from his Father, upon his penitent Return to him.

And no doubt, it was the Design of our blessed Saviour herein, to represent to us the Acceptance and the gracious Entertainment, that every relenting Sinner shall meet with from his heavenly Father, upon his Return to him by sincere Repentance.

And truly when we consider the aggravated Guilt of a prodigal Sinner, the Provocations and Affronts that he offers to the blessed God; and then contemplate how the Bowels of his offended Father work towards him; in

what manner he receives him; with what surprizing Marks of Affection and Joy he embraces him; and what marvellous Favours and Privileges he confers upon him; it may very well raise our Wonder and Astonishment; it may justly possess us with adoring Thoughts of the boundless Compassions of the blessed God, and fully convince us, That his Ways are not as our Ways, nor his Thoughts as ours, but as far above them as the Heavens are above the Earth, Isa. lv. 8, 9.

And that we may entertain more suitable Conceptions of the admirable Mercy of God towards a returning Sinner, and of the welcome Reception and Entertainment he may expect; I shall consider the several Steps and Gradations of it, that are here represented in this part of the Parable; all which highly tend both to enhance the Mercy of God, and to encourage our penitent Return to him. As,

First, From that Expression, That when the prodigal Son was yet a great way off, his Father saw him and had Compassion on him. We may observe, How exactly our heavenly Father takes notice of the first Motions of a penitent Sinner towards him; and how early the Bowels of divine Compassion yearn and work towards him.

Secondly, From his running to meet him, we may observe, How God's Readiness to re-admit a returning Sinner to his Favour, does even prevent his penitent Application and Suit for it.

Thirdly, From his falling on his Neck, and kissing him, without ever upbraiding him with his Folly; we may observe, How free and full the Exercise of divine Mercy

is in forgiving a penitent Sinner, and restoring him to his Favour.

Fourthly, From the Prodigal's ingenuous Confession of his Guilt and Unworthiness, we may infer, what ingenuous Impression God's pardoning Mercy should make on the Heart of a returning and pardon'd Sinner, to melt it into deeper Sorrow and Self-abasement.

Fifthly, From the Marks of Affection and Favour, which the Father here shew'd to the returning Prodigal, we may observe, That a gracious God does not only forgive a returning Sinner, but confers eminent Privileges and Benefits upon him.

Sixthly, From the Joy here express'd upon the Prodigal's Return, we may infer, That the Conversion of a Sinner, is matter of the highest Satisfaction and Joy to the blessed God, and should be so to all that are in his Family and Household.

Of these in their Order: And,

First, From that Expression, that when the prodigal Son was yet a great way off, his Father saw him, and had Compassion on him, we may observe, How exactly our heavenly Father takes notice of the first Motions of a penitent Sinner towards him, and how early his Bowels of Compassion yearn and work towards him.

As for earthly Fathers, their Bowels are not usually so easily mov'd and stirr'd, when disobedient Children have by great Provocations alienated their Affections, and as it were harden'd their Hearts against them. Perhaps indeed, when they see them actually prostrate at their Feet, and with Sighs and Tears, and all the Marks of Grief and Shame, imploring their Pity and Forgiveness, they may then feel some Emotions of Compassion, but the Object is not wont to affect them so strongly at a distance. But such are the boundless Compassions of our heavenly Father, that he does as it were with some Impatience, watch and wait for a fit Opportunity to exercise them. And therefore a poor Sinner no sooner entertains any relenting Thoughts in his Mind, he no sooner cherishes any sincere Purposes of Conversion in his Heart; he no sooner takes the least Step in his Return towards God, but his vigilant Eye observes all these Motions, and that with inward Pleasure and Satisfaction, and with suitable correspondent Motions of paternal Affection and Tenderness on his part. Does the Sinner's Heart relent and melt towards God? So does the Heart of his offended Father relent and melt towards him. Does the Sinner feel an inward Compunction of Soul for his Offences that he cannot be at rest till he return to God? So does his heavenly Father feel as it were an uneasy Emotion in his own Breast till he embrace him, and assure him of his Pardon and Favour. Does the Sinner form in his Mind the Project and Design of coming back to God? So does his Father's Pity put him on the Project and Design, of bringing about an actual Reconciliation; or (to speak more properly) it puts him on executing that merciful Project and Design, of reconciling such a Sinner to himself, which he had form'd in his eternal Counsels and Purposes. Does Ephraim in his penitent Reflections bemoan himself and say, *Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastized, as a Bullock unaccusom'd to the Yoke, turn thou me, and I shall be turned? Does he repent and smite upon his Thigh? He no sooner thus laments himself, but a gracious God saith, Surely I have heard Ephraim bemoaning himself (I have attentively hearken'd to his penitent Confessions and Cries.) And see how the Heart of a compassionate Father works towards him. Is Ephraim my dear Son? Is he a pleasant Child? For since I spake against him, I earnestly remember him still; therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will surely have Mercy upon him, saith the Lord, Jer. xxxi. 18, 19, 20. See how the Truth of this Observation was exemplify'd in this admirable Instance of divine Compassion: But,*

Secondly, From the Father's running to meet the prodigal Son, we may observe, how God's Readiness to re-admit a returning Sinner to his Favour, does even prevent his penitent Application and Suit to him for it.

He no sooner saw him on his way home, but when he was afar off he ran to meet him.

This is by no Means usual with earthly Parents, when they have received great Provocations from their undutiful Children, that run from their Family, and waste their Substance in riotous living. Though they may hear of their being penitent; and may feel some Stirrings of natural Affection and Pity towards them; yet they think it more prudent and requisite for maintaining their Authority, and expressing their just Displeasure, to refuse them any immediate Access into their Presence. They are wont to conceal those Sentiments of Pity which they do really feel: And such an offending Child must make use of powerful Friends or Relations to intercede for him; and 'tis not usually, till after earnest Intreaty and Application, that a provoked Parent will see such a prodigal Son, or admit him to speak to him, and beg his Forgiveness. But see here, how far the Bowels of divine Pity transcend those of human Compassion. Our offended heavenly Father runs with an early haste and speed to meet a returning prodigal Sinner. And indeed, so far do his Compassions prevent the Exercise of a Sinner's Repentance, that while we voluntarily depart from him, and entertain no Thoughts of a penitent Return, he then form'd the Project of Reconciliation; sent his own Son to obtain it, at the Expence of his Blood; sent his Messengers after us with a gracious Call and Invitation to return to his House, with the merciful Offer and Assurance of a free Pardon and a welcome Reception upon our sincere Conversion, and with the most earnest Solicitation to accept these gracious Proposals. His Intreaties to us to be reconciled, are antecedent to our penitent Suit to him for Pardon and Peace. And this is more than even the Prodigal's Father in my Text is said to have done; unless we suppose something of this hinted in his running to meet him. But doubtless, the Expression was chiefly design'd to intimate to us, That God is more intent upon this gracious Design of Reconciliation than we are. He is more ready to forgive, than we are to return. He is more forward in the Exercise of his pardoning Mercy, than we are in the Exercise of unfeigned Repentance and earnest Application for it.

'Tis no way hard or difficult with God to forgive a relenting Sinner, though it be so hard and tedious a Work to bring him into a truly penitent Frame and Disposition. The Prodigal arose and came to his Father; but his Father ran to meet him. So much more strong and quick were the Motions of his paternal Affection. Alas! we are slow and backward, and express a strange Reluctancy in our penitent Return to God: 'Tis not, till after a tedious Conflict with our dis-inclined Hearts, that we usually come to a fixed Determination about it: But no sooner are we in Motion, but his Mercy flies as it were with a winged Speed; it prevents our Requests with its gracious Offers; it meets us on our Way with a sealed Pardon in its Hand; it grants our Suit for Reconciliation and Peace before we have time to utter it. Our heavenly Father, notwithstanding all the Affronts we have put upon him, feels no Aversion and Reluctancy in his own Breast in the Exercise of his Mercy towards an Object, meet for it by unfeigned Repentance, but rather a forward Propension thereto.

O how astonishing are these Methods of divine Pity towards such provoking Sinners! and how far beyond the ordinary Instances of the tenderest Compassion in earthly Parents! especially if we consider farther,

Thirdly, From the Father's falling on the Neck of his prodigal Son, and kissing him, without ever upbraiding him with his past Guilt; we may observe, How free and full the Exercise of divine Mercy is in forgiving a relenting Sinner, and restoring him to his Favour.

For the Father's falling on his Neck, his embracing and kissing him, was an evident Mark of an entire Forgiveness and Reconciliation; that he had pardon'd all that was past, and did now receive him into Favour again.

Now

Now we may observe, that this is not the usual Way that *earthly Parents* are wont to treat such rebellious and prodigal Children. The *prodigal Son* might reasonably have expected that his *Father*, at the first Interview, wou'd have receiv'd him with *Frowns*, and not with *Smiles*; that he wou'd have entertain'd him with severe *Reproaches* for all his *Disobedience* and *Perverseness*, his *Folly* and *Ingratitude*. He might well expect to hear some such Language as this, "Go back, thou *Rebel*, to thy *Harlots* and thy *jovial Company*, and let them now maintain thee, among whom thou hast wasted thy *Substance* in riotous living; or return to thy churlish Master, that he may send thee again to his *Fields* to keep his *Swine*, and feed with them on the *Husks*; the *Employment* and the *Fare* is good enough for such a *Spend-thrift* as thou hast been." Such a severe *Lecture* as this he might well think his angry Father would read him: But you see there is not one Word to any such purpose. His *Father* receives him with a *smiling* and not a *frowning* Countenance, instead of bidding him begone out of his Sight, he embraces him with a transport of tender Affection: Nay, treats him as if all his past Offences were entirely forgotten and buried.

And such is the *Treatment* that a returning Sinner finds at the Hand of a gracious God. He does not upbraid him with his past Guilt; he does not terrify him with severe *Menaces*: No, he treats him as if he had never offended. He casts all his Offences behind his Back; nay, into the bottom of the Sea, Micah vii. 19. He blots them out as a Cloud, and as a thick Cloud. He remembers them no more; but immediately receives him into his compassionate Arms, owns and accepts him as his Child, and speaks no other Language to him but that reviving one; *Be of good Cheer, for thy Iniquities are forgiven*, Matth. ix. 2. All the Sinner's past Provocations are buried in perpetual Oblivion: All his crimson and scarlet Guilt is wash'd away by an Act of gracious Absolution; and now an entire Amity and Peace is restor'd, a happy Reconciliation is made up. There passes nothing between a reconcil'd Father and his returning Child, but Expressions of the greatest Endearment and Love; and the highest Assurances on the Father's part of entire Forgiveness and tenderest Affection. O the marvellous and transcendent Mercy of God, that can pass by so aggravated Guilt without ever reproaching the Sinner with it, and can restore him to all the Marks of Favour and welcome Acceptance after he had done so much to render himself unworthy of it!

But though a gracious God so entirely forgive a relenting Sinner, it may be justly expected, that he will not so easily forgive himself; and the more his heavenly Father seems to forget his Faults, the more he will penitently remember them himself. And therefore,

Fourthly, From the *Prodigal's* ingenuous Confession of his Guilt and great Unworthiness, we may infer, *What ingenuous Impressions* God's pardoning Mercy shou'd make on the Heart of a returning and pardon'd Sinner, to melt it into deep Sorrow and Self-abasement.

Though the *Prodigal* found himself in his Father's compassionate Arms, and embrac'd with all the Marks of tender Affection; yet the Assurance of his Father's Love did the more powerfully excite in his Heart all the *Workings* of Shame and Sorrow, of Humility and Confusion; of a just Abhorrence of, and Indignation against himself. And though his Father was entirely silent as to any *Reproaches* he might have expected upon his first appearing before him, he is not silent himself, but the more free and ingenuous in his penitential Confessions: *Father, I have sinn'd against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Child*, ver. 21.

And such should be the Temper and Carriage of a penitent Sinner in his Return to God. The more freely he is forgiven, the more shou'd he be ashamed and grieved that he has so dishonoured and displeased so gracious a Father. The more he finds the Bowels of divine Compassion yearning over him, and covering all his past heinous Guilt with a vail of Mercy, the

more shou'd his Heart dissolve into penitential Tears, and even abhor it self for its inexcusable Provocations.

The more he experiences the Love of a Father reviv'd towards him, notwithstanding all his undutiful and disobliging Carriage, the more strong shou'd the *Motions* of filial Love be in him; venting it self in ingenuous Remorse for all his Offences, in bitter and self-condemning Reflections on his own Disobedience and Ingratitude; and deep Resolution to return to such Folly no more. He shou'd feel something of that Temper and Spirit which God by the Prophet intimates shou'd be in his pardon'd People; *That thou may'st remember and be confounded, and never open thy Mouth any more, because of thy Shame, when I am pacify'd towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord God*, Ezek. xvi. 63.

But of this more will occur in the Application.

Fifthly, From the many Marks of Favour which the Father shew'd to the returning Prodigal, we may observe, *That a gracious God does not only forgive a returning Sinner, but confers eminent Privileges and Benefits upon him*.

The *Prodigal's* Father not only forgave him, and re-admitted him into his Favour and Family, but restor'd him to all the Privileges, to all the Marks of Esteem and Respect that belong'd to a dutiful Child. He came home, doubtless, in a naked or ragged Condition; but the Father calls for the best Robe to be brought forth and put upon him, and for a Ring to put on his Hand, and Shoes upon his Feet. He came home ready to perish with Hunger, and the Father calls for the fatted Calf to be kill'd, that he might entertain him upon his Return with a welcome Feast.

And doubtless this part of the Parable represents to us, that a gracious God not only pardons a returning Prodigal, but restores him to all the Dignity, and all the Privileges of a dutiful and beloved Child. For to wear such a long Robe, to wear a Ring on the Hand, and Shoes on the Feet, was the Mark of Children, not of Servants; nay, a Mark of such as were considerable for their Rank and Quality.

I know some Expositors have been so particular, as to interpret each Expression of some particular spiritual Privilege that God's reconciled Children are restored unto. As by the best Robe, some have understood the Righteousness of Christ, by the Merit whereof we are justify'd, and our Nakedness cover'd. Others have understood by it, that inward Holiness, that beautiful Image of God, whereby our Souls are in our Regeneration adorn'd. And this is frequently compared to white Robes, and to fine Linnen. See Rev. xix. 8. So by the Ring or Signet on his Hand, *Grotius* understands the Gift of God's indwelling Spirit, by which we are seal'd to the Day of Redemption. And by the Shoes on his Feet, the same Expositor understands his being instrumental in the Conversion of others. So by the fatted Calf, some understand our blessed Saviour the spiritual Repast of our Souls; others the Joys of the Holy Spirit.

But I see no Reason why we shou'd too anxiously seek or pursue such Allusions that are more fanciful than solid. It seems every way sufficient to observe, that as the *Prodigal's* Father did by no means treat him upon his Return, according to his former Deserts; but on the contrary, not only pardon'd him, but plac'd all imaginable Marks of Favour and Respect upon him, restoring him to all the Honour and Privileges of a Child in his Family, notwithstanding his having been an undutiful One. So does a merciful God, not only not punish a returning Sinner, but on the contrary, he heaps on him all the Marks of paternal Affection; he puts him into the happy Circumstances of a favourite Child; he makes him a Sharer in all the Dignity and Privileges which belong to that Relation, notwithstanding his having render'd himself so unworthy of them.

So that we may suppose all the Privileges I mention'd before as included. When a compassionate God receives a returning Penitent, he not only forgives his past Provocations, but he accepts and owns him as

his Child, in his beloved Son, Eph. i. 6. Nay, he sends his Holy Spirit into his Heart, Gal. iv. 6. He adorns his Soul with his amiable Image; he seals him by his Holy Spirit to the Day of Redemption: He gives him Freedom of Access to his Throne of Grace; he entertains him with all the rich Provisions of his House and Family; he replenishes his Soul with spiritual Consolations and Joys; he makes him an Heir of the Heavenly Inheritance; he makes a most happy Change in his Condition and State; he that was before almost spiritually naked, is now richly adorn'd; he that was before almost famished, is now plentifully feasted; nay, has Bread enough in his Father's House and to spare; he that was before dead is now made alive; he that was lost is happily found.

I should have entred on the

Sixth Observation, viz. That from the Joy here exprest upon the Prodigal's Return, we may observe, That the Conversion of a Sinner is matter of the highest Satisfaction and Joy to the blessed God, and shou'd be so to all that belong to his Household and Family.

But the Consideration of that will require a distinct Discourse.

I shall therefore now improve the five foregoing Observations, and that in the two following Uses.

I. I would hence address my self to every unconverted ungodly Sinner; and make use of what has been deliver'd as an Argument and Motive to serious Repentance and Conversion.

And the Contemplation of that welcome Reception which the returning Prodigal met with, shou'd incite you to a sincere Return to God.

Partly, As it is a great Encouragement to return to God.

Partly, As 'tis a strong Obligation to return in point of Gratitude.

Partly, As it represents it to be your own undoubted Interest.

1. The Contemplation of that welcome Reception the returning Prodigal met with, is a very powerful Encouragement to return to God.

If indeed a Sinner that is conscious to himself of his being guilty of great Provocations, had to do with an implacable Enemy, or inexorable Judge, it were no wonder if absolute despair of Mercy should render him obstinate, and should stifle all Motions of Repentance in his Breast. But this, O Sinner, is by no means thy Case! Thy Condition is so far from being thus hopeless, that thou canst not desire more satisfying assurance of Pardon and gracious Acceptance upon thy penitent Return.

Thou hast to do with a gracious Father, whose Compassions infinitely transcend all Bowels of human Pity; and whose Ways and Thoughts of Mercy are far above the Ways and Thoughts of Man. He watches to observe if there be any relenting and self-condemning Thoughts cherish'd in thy Mind; any Purposes of sincere Conversion harbour'd in thy Breast. And he no sooner discerns them, but there are some correspondent Relentings in his Breast, some Yearnings in his Bowels, some Emotions of Pity and Compassion in his Heart towards thee: No sooner canst thou take one Step in thy Way towards him, but he runs to meet thee; and is more forward and ready to exercise his pardoning Mercy, than thou art to seek and implore it with a penitent Heart. Nor needst thou fear either his angry Frowns, or his avenging Hand; he will not so much as upbraid thee with thy past Folly, or put thee to the blush with his grievous cutting Reproaches: On the contrary, all thy Provocations shall be forgotten and over-look'd: He will stretch out his compassionate Arms to embrace thy returning Soul, and welcome it with the most endearing Expressions of paternal Affection and Love. Nor shall thy past Guilt, how great soever, exclude thee from the Dignity of his Children, or from any of the invaluable Privileges of his Family. And canst thou have greater Encouragement to return than the Assurance of so welcome a Reception as this? O let not then thy guilty Fears

keep thee back, and tempt thee in fullen Despondency to flee from such a compassionate Father, and to continue a voluntary Exile from his House.

What tho' thy Guilt be great and aggravated, his Mercy is infinite and boundless? What tho' thy Offences and Provocations have been numberless, there is in him a multitude of Mercies to forgive and cover the multitude of thy Sins; and if the Wicked will forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous his Thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, he will have Mercy upon him, and abundantly pardon him (or multiply to pardon, as he has multiplied to offend, as the Original imports) Isa. lv. 7. What though thy Iniquities have abounded when his Grace can super-abound? What though thy Debts be as ten thousand Talents, for Number and Aggravation, when his infinite Compassion can forgive them all? O let then such satisfying grounds of Hope concerning thy welcome Acceptance overcome all the Jealousies and Fears of thy mis-giving Mind; and encourage thee to come and cast thy guilty Soul upon the boundless Mercy of God, to prostrate thy self at his Feet; nay, to throw thy self into those compassionate Arms which he opens to embrace thee. To doubt of Forgiveness and Restoration to his Favour after such a Declaration of his gracious Nature, would be inexcusable Unbelief; and at once offer the greatest Affront both to his Mercy and to his Truth. But further,

2. The Contemplation of that welcome Reception which the returning Prodigal met with, shou'd highly oblige you to return to God in point of Gratitude.

Shall that offended Majesty that might glorify his Justice every Moment in your deserv'd Ruin, wait to be gracious to you; and shall not the Riches of his Goodness and Long-suffering lead you to Repentance? Shall he invite you to return with the freest Offers of Pardon, and the highest Assurance of a gracious Acceptance; and will you despise the invaluable Offers of that sovereign Mercy that you stand in so infinite need of; and without which you are likely to be remedilessly miserable, and that for ever? Shall his Bowels of Compassion thus yearn towards you, and your Hearts never relent and melt towards him? Shall there be such Workings of paternal Love in his Breast, and no Motions of filial Affections in yours? Is he ready to run and meet your returning Souls, and are you so slow and backward to take the least Step towards him? Are his Arms of infinite Mercy extended to receive you, and will not you, whose Guilt needs such a Sanctuary from eternal Vengeance, flee into them? Is he so desirous to restore you to the Dignity and Privileges of his Children; and will you treat the Offer of so inestimable a Favour with Contempt and Scorn? O amazing Dis-ingenuity and Ingratitude! How justly will those perish under the remediless Vengeance of God, who thus despise his tenderest Compassions and Love! How will those become the unpitied Objects of his inexorable Justice, who refus'd to become the happy Objects of his pardoning Mercy! What can those expect but the utmost Severity, who thus affront and spurn at the Bowels of divine Pity!

But,

3. The Contemplation of the welcome Reception which the returning Prodigal met with, shou'd convince every ungodly Sinner, that 'tis his highest Interest to return to God.

Mistake not, Sinner, as if the blessed God were so solicitous for thy Return from any real Advantage or Benefit that he can propose to himself by it. His Happiness and essential Glory will suffer no Diminution by thy continued Disobedience, and by thy deserv'd Ruin; nor can it receive any Addition by thy penitent Return: No, 'tis thy own Advantage and Interest, thy Welfare and Salvation that he seeks, and is so earnestly intent upon. He is only solicitous to glorify his Mercy in thy Restoration to his Favour and Family, and in that real Happiness that will thereby redound to thy self. 'Tis thy Condemnation and Misery, and everlasting Per-

dition that he seeks to prevent. And shall a gracious God be so tenderly concern'd for thy everlasting Welfare, and wilt thou be stupidly negligent of thy own? Shall he offer thee Pardon and Forgiveness, and wilt thou refuse it; who without it must certainly perish for ever? Shall he be willing to restore thee to his Favour, and wilt thou, who dost infinitely need it, and whose Welfare entirely depends upon it, slight the free Tender of it? Is he willing to adopt thee into his Family, and invest thee in all the Privileges of his Children; and are these inestimable Advantages, so despicable in thine Eyes, that thou shouldst think 'em unworthy of thy thankful Acceptance? What, hadst thou rather attend Swine, and feed with them on Husks, than dwell in his House, and share in the plentiful Provisions thereof! Hadst thou rather continue in thy Rags and Nakedness, than to wear the beautiful Ornaments and Garb of his Children? Hadst thou rather continue an ignominious and wretched Slave of Satan and Sin, and Heir of Hell, than become a reconciled Child of God, and Heir of Heaven! O the astonishing Stupidity and Folly of impenitent Sinners, that so apparently counter-act their own Interest! that in fleeing from a gracious God flee from their own Happiness! That by their refusing to return to him, prefer the Servitude of Sin before the Liberty of his Children; and the Misery of an unhappy Exile before all the Privileges of his House and Family! That prefer Vengeance and Wrath, Death and Hell, before Pardon and Peace, Heaven and Salvation!

If then, O foolish Sinner, either the Assurance of God's Forgiveness and Favour can encourage thee to return to him, or the Obligations of Gratitude can attract thy Heart, or the Sense and Conviction of thy own Interest can prevail with thee: Let all these Arguments persuade thee to resolve upon a sincere Conversion to God, and to put thy Resolves into speedy Execution. Let thy own Necessity force and drive thee: Let his infinite Compassion invite and draw thee to him; and never rest till thou dost, with a relenting Heart, cast thy self upon his boundless Mercy; and dost find thy self embrac'd in his Arms of Love. O may some Prodigals be this Day brought home to God, and from this very Season date their happy Return to him!

But,

II. I would hence address my self to those that have return'd to God, and have experienced this transcendent Mercy of his in their Pardon and Restoration to his Favour.

And on such I wou'd urge three things by way of Advice.

I. Adore that infinite and marvellous Mercy of God that you have experienc'd.

We may well think that the Prodigal in my Text wou'd be strangely surpriz'd, and deeply affected with such a Treatment from his offended Father, so contrary to all reasonable Expectation. With what Admiration and Thankfulness wou'd it fill his Heart, that instead of severe Punishment, or angry Frowns, or at least reproachful and cutting Language, which he had so much deserv'd, he shou'd meet with nothing but gracious Smiles, and most tender Embraces; and all imaginable Expressions of paternal Affection and Love! O how wou'd such unusual Pity and preventing Love melt and ravish his Heart, and make him stand amaz'd at the kind Usage he receiv'd so contrary to his just Deserts.

And shall not we feel something of the like Emotions of Wonder and Gratitude in our Reflections upon the Dealings of our Heavenly Father with us? Should it not deeply affect our Hearts, that though

we, like foolish Prodigals, had wandred from him; that though we, like undutiful Children, had been guilty of most heinous Offences that might have provok'd him to have cast us off for ever: Yet no sooner did we entertain the Thoughts and Purposes of returning to him, but he (whose Grace excited those very Motions in us) observ'd them with a favourable Eye; and not only assisted us in our Endeavours, but gave us the most welcome Reception; forgiving all our past Guilt, without ever reproaching us with it; restoring us as entirely to his Favour as if we had never offended, justifying us through the Redeemer's Blood; adorning us with the Graces of his Holy Spirit, admitting us into his Family and Church; feeding us with the rich Provisions of his House, training us up by the continual Cultivation of his Grace for the Glories of his Heavenly Kingdom; and giving us here not only a Title to, but the most precious Earnest and Pledge of that glorious Inheritance that is reserv'd for our endless and sure Possession?

O the astonishing Wonders of Divine Mercy and Love! The unsearchable Riches of his Grace! Is this the Treatment that Enemies and Rebels might expect at the Hands of an incens'd Sovereign? Is this the Carriage that disobedient and prodigal Children might look for from a Father whom they had done so much to provoke and disoblige! Have we not here the most convincing Demonstration of the Truth of what he professes concerning himself, That he has no pleasure in the Death of a Sinner that dies, but rather that he should turn and live, Ezek. xviii. 32.

And shall not we be guilty of most inexcusable Ingratitude, if we do not admire such unparallel'd Compassion as this? If we that have found such matchless Pity towards us in the Breast of our heavenly Father, should not also find and feel divine Love shed abroad in our Hearts, and our Souls brought under the ingenuous Constraints of it? Shall not we ardently love him, when we have so much, and that so freely forgiven? And shall not we meditate such Returns of filial Duty as may be answerable to such Obligations as his paternal Affection has laid upon us? But,

2. Let the Sense of your welcome Reception upon your penitent Return to God, promote in you the deeper Exercises of ingenuous Repentance.

And truly, if we have any Principles of Ingenuity in our Hearts, the Freeness and Riches of Divine Grace in our Pardon and Acceptance, after so great Provocations, will melt us into Shame and Self-abhorrence, and fill us with just Indignation against our own Folly and Ingratitude. The more ready a gracious God is to forgive us, we should be more hard to forgive our selves; the more he forbears to reproach us, the more shou'd our own Hearts smite us, that ever we shou'd carry it so undutifully towards so compassionate a Father. We shou'd be ready to say, "Is this the gracious God whom I have so greatly offended and dishonour'd, from whom I have so perversely gone astray, and whom I have been so unwilling to return to? O what Excuse or Apology can I make for all my obstinate and dis-ingenuous Carriage towards him, who has, notwithstanding all my Provocations, express'd such Tenderness of paternal Affection towards me? How shou'd we cry out with the relenting Prodigal, Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy Son! ver. 21.

3. Let us rejoice in the happy Change that is made in our State upon our sincere Return to God.

But of that there will be more occasion to speak under the sixth and last Observation.

S E R M O N XXI.

ON

The PARABLE of the Prodigal SON.

LUKE XV. 22, 23, 24.

- 22 *But the Father said to his Servants; Bring forth the best Robe, and put it on him, and put a Ring on his Hand, and Shoes on his Feet.*
 23 *And bring hither the fatted Calf, and kill it, and let us eat and be merry.*
 24 *For this my Son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry, &c. —*



H A V E already consider'd,

I. The Prodigal's voluntary Departure from his Father: And,

II. The miserable and wretched Condition that his Folly brought him into.

I then,

III. Consider'd him as coming to himself, and returning to his Father. And,

IV. I proceeded to consider, The welcome Reception and Entertainment which the Prodigal met with from his Father upon his penitent Return to him.

And here I observ'd several Particulars worthy of our Remark, and serious Consideration.

First, From the Father's seeing him a great Way off, &c. I observ'd, How exactly our heavenly Father takes notice of the first Motions of a penitent Sinner towards him, and how early the Bowels of his Compassion work towards him.

Secondly, I observ'd from the Father's running to meet him, how God's Readiness to re-admit a penitent Sinner to his Favour, does even prevent his humble Application and Suit to him for it.

Thirdly, I observ'd from the Father's falling on his Neck, &c. How free and full the Exercise of divine Mercy is, in the Forgiveness and Acceptance of a relenting Sinner.

Fourthly, From the Prodigal's ingenuous Confession, I observ'd, What ingenuous Impressions God's pardoning Mercy should make on the Heart of a returning and pardon'd Sinner, to melt him into deeper Sorrow and Self-abasement.

Fifthly, From the manifold Marks of Affection which the Father shew'd to the Prodigal Son upon his Return, I observ'd, That a gracious God does not only forgive a returning Penitent, but confers eminent Privileges and Benefits upon him.

These Observations I consider'd, and made some practical Improvement of in the last Discourse; I come now in the

Sixth and last Place, From the Joy that was here express'd by the Father, and by his Family, upon this Occasion of the Prodigal's Return, to observe, That the Conversion of a Sinner to God is Matter of the highest Satisfaction and Delight to him, and should be so to all that belong to his Household and Family.

It was the Father's Order and Command, that on this Occasion they should express their Mirth by a joyful Feast, which accordingly was comply'd with; and he justifies their being merry and joyful on this Occa-

sion, by assigning the solid Ground of it: For this my Son was dead; and is alive again, was lost, and is found. Nay, when the elder Brother envied the Prodigal's welcome Reception, and seem'd to be disturb'd and grieved at the Joy express'd on this Occasion, the Father gently rebukes his envious Temper, by alledging this very justifiable Occasion of it, *It was meet* (saith he) *that we should make merry and be glad, for this thy Brother was dead, and is now alive; was lost, and is found.* See ver. ult.

I shall therefore in speaking to this Subject,

I. Consider, What is included in the Conversion of a Sinner as the Ground of this Joy, viz. That one who was dead, is now made alive; one who was lost, is now found again.

II. I shall shew how justifiable a Ground this is of the highest Joy;

And then I shall apply the whole.

I. I shall consider what is here included in the Conversion of a Sinner as the Ground of this Joy, viz. That thereby one that was dead is made alive, and one that was lost is found again.

And here, in speaking to this Head, I shall not consider the Doctrine of Conversion at large, but only consider the Change made in the Nature and State, in the Life and Practice of a true Convert, as 'tis very emphatically represented in those Expressions of the Text. For you may observe in them, that,

Before his Conversion, he is represented as dead and lost.

Upon his Conversion, he is represented as made alive, and found again.

First, A Sinner before his Conversion is represented as dead and lost.

And both these Expressions include a very significant and lively Description of his wretched Case, and we may consider them a-part; tho' the Case is the same, only under different Allusions.

1. A Sinner before his Conversion, is represented as dead.

Now 'tis evident, this does not import, that he was devoid of natural Life; for the Prodigal himself was not in this Sense dead, when he was gone from his Father, and spending his Substance in riotous living. Nor does it import, that a Sinner, in his unconverted State, is devoid of all Capacity of being restor'd to spiritual Life, no more than the Prodigal was incapable of being made alive,

alive, in the Sense, and in the Account of his Father. No, the Sinner's reasonable Powers, tho' wofully perverted, are not extinguished. His Understanding makes him yet capable to consider the miserable Case he is reduc'd to, and the Proposals that divine Grace makes for his Recovery from it; and tho' his Will is wretchedly enslav'd by sensual Lusts, yet it has not lost that self-determining Power, that is essential to Man as a reasonable and free Agent. For otherwise, it were as vain an Attempt for us to address our selves to an unconverted Sinner with Persuasions and Counsels to return to God, as to use Arguments with a Stone to move it self, or to reason with a dead Corps to induce it to walk, and to perform all the Functions of a living one.

But this Expression does import, that such an unconverted Sinner is devoid of spiritual or divine Life, and that he is under a virtual Sentence of eternal Death.

1. Such an unconverted Sinner is devoid of spiritual or divine Life.

He is (as the Scripture elsewhere speaks) alienated from the Life of God, Eph. iv. 18.

As the Prodigal Son was dead to him, and in his Account, when he was gone from him, when all affectionate Intercourse between him and his Father was broken off, and he was engag'd in that profuse and licentious way of living, that was more grievous to his Father, than if he had heard of his being naturally dead: So is an unconverted Sinner dead unto God; he is engag'd in a voluntary Departure and Defection from him; he is no way dispos'd to live unto God, in Pursuance of the great End of his Creation, which was to glorify him as his Owner and sovereign Lord, and enjoy him as his final Blessedness. All amicable Communion and Intercourse between God and the Sinner is broken off. He has no dutiful Inclination towards the blessed God, to know and admire, to adore and love, to obey and serve, to imitate and resemble him, and to seek his satisfying Happiness in the Fruition of him; but on the contrary, his Heart is possess'd with a powerful Aversion to such a divine Life. He has no inward Byass in his depraved Nature that should effectually prompt him to propose the Glory of God as his highest Aim, to make his Laws the Rule of his Heart and Life, and to be influenc'd by a superlative Love to him, as the commanding Principle of all his Actions.

And as in a dead Corps no vital Motions appear, so in an unregenerate Soul there are no Motions of divine Life, no prevalent Fear of God or Affection to him; no ardent Desires after him, or satisfying Delight in him; no Zeal for his Glory, or Devotedness to his Interest; no Breathings after his sanctifying Grace; no realizing Views, and joyful Hopes, and vigorous Pursuits of eternal Glory.

And as a dead Corps is but a ghastly and undesirable Sight, which we can take no Pleasure in looking upon; so is an unconverted Sinner a very unwelcome and loathsome Spectacle in the Eyes of an infinitely holy God, who cannot behold a Creature so devoid of all devout Affections towards himself, so perverted from the great End of its Creation, so wofully degenerated from its primitive Beauty and Perfection, without a just Abhorrence and Aversion.

And what has been said of every unconverted Sinner, is much more true of every profligate One. And such a One the Prodigal was chiefly design'd to be the Emblem of. And of such we may well say as the Apostle does of her that lives in impure Pleasure, *That they are dead while they live*, 1 Tim. v. 6. Nay, such a profligate Sinner looks not only like a Corps that is dead, but like one that is putrify'd, and become corrupt and stinking: So is such a licentious Sinner not only devoid of all Principles and Motions of divine Life, but even over-run with Filth and Putrefaction, that renders him a noysom as well as ghastly Spectacle. I have read of a very beautiful Youth, who being surprized with sudden

Death, was buried; but after he had lain a while in the Grave, some of his surviving Relations had the Curiosity to have his Coffin open'd, that they might have his Picture drawn; but when the Coffin was open'd, they were surpriz'd to find, that not only Worms but Serpents were crawling upon, and had miserably defac'd all the Parts of his Body. And methinks, a licentious Sinner is much what such a hideous Spectacle as this. Could we see thro' his fair Out-side and Coffin of his Body into his Heart, O what a Swarm of vile and hateful Lusts, of wicked Thoughts, and impure Desires, and brutish Passions should we there discern, that miserably deface his precious Soul, and render it such a loathsom and frightful Sight to every considerate Beholder, as that I have now mention'd. And (to end the Parallel) as a dead Carcase is devoid of all Sense and Feeling, never perceiving the Injuries that may be done to it; so is the Soul of a licentious Sinner past all spiritual Feeling, insensible of its wretched Condition, never perceiving the Wounds given to it by every wilful Sin, never affected with any Dangers or Evils 'tis threatned with.

In a Word, every unconverted, especially every profligate Sinner is dead to all the valuable Purposes of Life.

But when such a Sinner is said to be dead, it may import further.

2. That he is under a virtual Sentence of Death.

The Prodigal's Father look'd upon his Son as dead, because he expected to hear no better Account of him than that of his Ruin, or his coming to some untimely End.

But an unconverted Sinner may much more be regarded as one dead; for as we commonly say of a Malefactor condemn'd to dye, that he is a dead Man: We may as truly say it of an impenitent Sinner, he is by the virtual Sentence of the Law of God condemn'd to dye; Death is the just Wages of his manifold Transgressions, even that eternal Death that is oppos'd to eternal Life, Rom. vi. ult.

And as this is the Case of every unconverted Sinner, so much more of every profligate One; for he is one that has run deeper than others in Arrears to the Justice of God, and has made himself far more a Child of Wrath, and Heir of Hell than others.

And sure the Case of such a Sinner is dreadful, who is thus, by his Guilt, bound over to eternal Death. And we should apprehend it to be so, if we understood or consider'd what eternal Death includes; for 'tis not an Extinction of natural Life (how well comparatively were it for Sinners if it were so:) No, 'tis an endless Separation from God the true Fountain of Life, and Light, and Joy, and a sinking into remediless Darkness and Horror, Anguish and Despair. And those are dead indeed who are liable to such a Misery as this. But farther,

2. A Sinner before his Conversion is represented as lost as well as dead.

And this Expression seems particularly to allude to the Parable of the Shepherd and his Sheep in the beginning of this Chapter, v. 4, 5, &c. As a Sheep when stray'd is said to be lost, both because 'tis no longer of any Use and Advantage to the Shepherd, and because 'tis like to perish for want of his Care, by becoming the Prey of some ravenous Creature: So an unconverted Sinner may be said to be lost in both these Senses.

1. Before his Conversion, he is lost to the Service of God his rightful Owner.

The Prodigal's Father reckon'd his Son lost as to all that Obedience and Service he expected from him. See Ver. 29.

We are all of us, by Obligation, the Sheep of his Pasture, Psal. c. 3. He has an absolute Propriety in us, and Right to our utmost Service. Now we are all of us wandering Sheep, who have gone astray, turning every one after his own (wretched) Way. And therefore, while we continue in our State of Revolt and Disobedience, we are lost to all the Service and Use he expects from us. That blessed God that made us, reaps no Tribute

Tribute of Glory from us, by our Belief of, and Subjection to his revealed Will, and by that spiritual Homage and Worship we should pay to him. That merciful Saviour that has shed his Blood as the Price of our Redemption, reaps no Honour from us by our thankful Acceptance of his offer'd Grace and Salvation; and by our unfeigned Dedication of that Life to him, which he has purchas'd at the Expence of his own: So that as to all those excellent Ends and Purposes for which we were made and redeem'd, we are entirely lost.

And much more may this be said of a profligate Sinner, who lives to quite contrary Purposes and Ends, to the Dishonour of God, and to the Reproach of our blessed Saviour. Such a one is at present entirely lost to his Service, being openly engag'd in the contrary Service of Satan and Sin: But,

2. A Sinner before Conversion is lost, as that imports his Danger of perishing for ever.

The Prodigal's Father reckon'd his Son lost when he was from under his Eye and Care, and left to himself, and to his giddy Counsels and Conduct; and therefore expected to hear no other than a sorrowful Account of his being ruin'd and undone.

And much more may we reckon an unconverted Sinner lost, when by a voluntary Departure from God, he casts himself out of his Protection and indulgent Care. He is then enter'd on those Paths of Sin, that lead to Hell and Destruction. He is expos'd as a Prey to that roaring Lion that goes about seeking whom he may devour, 1 Pet. v. 8. He is at present lost as to all Hopes of Heaven and Salvation, and in danger of remediless Perdition.

And what is said of every unconverted Sinner, is much more applicable to every profligate One. Such a one is wandred far from the Paths of Life, and has made a dreadful Progress in the Road of Death and Hell. He is sunk into an almost irrecoverable Distance from God; and Satan seems to hold him fast in his Paws as his Prey, and as one of those that are taken captive by him at his Pleasure, 2 Tim. ii. ult. Such a one seems to stand on the very Brink of eternal Destruction, and looks in the Eye and Judgment of all serious Beholders, like one that is lost and undone for ever.

This is the deplorable Case of a Sinner before his Conversion: But,

Secondly, Upon his Conversion it may be truly said of him, he that was dead is made alive, and he that was lost is found.

1. He that was dead is now made alive, i. e.

He is restor'd to spiritual and divine Life, and thereby to the Hope of Life eternal.

1. He is restor'd to spiritual and divine Life.

The Prodigal reckon'd his Son alive again, when he hoped he would now live to be a Comfort and Honour to his Father.

So is the dead Sinner then alive to God, when those holy Principles and Inclinations are implanted in his Soul, that will enable and dispose him to live to God. He is then alive to God, when his Understanding is enlighten'd and replenish'd with divine Knowledge and Faith; when his Will is conform'd to the holy Nature and Will of God; when his Affections are elevated to, and fix'd on God, and on divine and heavenly Objects. He is then alive to God, when the Bent of his Soul is turn'd towards him; so that God's Glory is the great End he proposes and pursues; his Laws are the Rule he observes and follows; his Love is the predominant Principle he is act'd by. He is now alive to God, since to glorify and please him, to adore and love him, to obey and serve him, and to seek his satisfying Blessedness; in him is the main Scope and principal Study and Business of his Life: In a Word, he now lives not to himself, but to God; he is quicken'd from his Death in Sin, and recover'd to a truly holy and heavenly Life. So that he now lives to all the valuable Ends and Purposes for which such a reasonable Creature was made, even a Life truly devoted to the Honour of God, and acceptable in his Sight. Nay,

2. He is thereby restor'd to the Hope of eternal Life.

For those Principles of divine Life implanted in his Soul are the Seed of a blessed Immortality; and are accordingly represented by our Saviour as a Well of Water springing up to everlasting Life, John iv. 14. A true Convert has that spiritual Light set up in his Mind, which is as the Dawning of eternal Day. He has that Grace sown in his Heart that is the Bud of eternal Glory; he has that inward Peace there, that is the First-Fruits of everlasting Joy; so that he is one recover'd from the Borders of remediless Despair and Death, to the reviving Hope of a glorious and endless Life. So truly may it be said of him, *That he that was once dead is now made alive.* But,

2. Upon the Conversion of a Sinner, he that was lost is now found.

The Prodigal's Father reckon'd his returning Son now found, both as to his Service, and his own Advantage:

So is a true Convert found again.

1. In respect of God, to whose Service he returns.

He is as a straying Sheep brought home to the Fold of Christ. He is now recover'd from the wretched unjust Vassalage of Satan and Sin, to devote himself to the Service of his rightful Lord, his gracious Father, and merciful Redeemer. He is one now dispos'd to glorify God with that Body and Soul which are his, but were too long alienated from his Use, to whom they did of Right belong. God will now have the principal Use of his Reason and Judgment, his Will and Affections, his Strength and Vigour, his Time and all his Talents: All these will be devoted to the Glory and Interest, and employ'd in the Service of that blessed God, who justly claims an absolute Propriety in him.

2. A true Convert is also found again in respect of his own true Advantage.

He is now deliver'd as a Prey out of the Jaws of the devouring Lion; he is rescu'd from the pernicious Dominion of the malicious Destroyer of Souls, and pluck'd as a Brand out of the Fire; he is now return'd to Jesus Christ the compassionate Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, 1 Pet. ii. 25. He is brought under the Conduct of his Spirit and Grace, and under the Care of his indulgent Providence, and is now likely to be safe for ever in his heavenly Fold. He is become one of those Sheep, of whom our Lord tells us, *That he knows them, and will give them eternal Life, and none shall pluck them out of his Hands,* John x. 27, 28. He is one deliver'd from the Powers of Darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of the dear Son of God, in whose final Salvation divine Grace shall be for ever magnify'd. So happily is he found in respect of his own everlasting Interest.

And all this is included in this Conversion of a Sinner to God, which is here represented as the Ground of so great Joy.

I come therefore,

II. To shew, That the Conversion of a Sinner is a justifiable Ground of the highest Joy, viz. Because, that thereby, one that was dead is made alive, and one that was lost is found.

And that this is a solid Ground of great Joy, will appear, if we consider, either the Glory that thereby redounds to the blessed God, or the Benefit and Happiness that occurs to the converted Sinner himself.

1. The Conversion of a Sinner will appear to be a solid Ground of great Joy, if we consider the Glory that thereby redounds to the blessed God.

And indeed, the Advancement of the Glory of God is the most justifiable Ground of solid Joy, and will be the most powerful Spring of it to all that are act'd with divine Zeal. And sure nothing is more eminently conducive thereto than a Sinner's Conversion: For thereby one of his revolted Creatures is brought back to him, and his Interest enlarg'd on the Ruins of Satan's usurped Empire. There is one Subject more added to his Kingdom, and one Child to his Family; there is one more whose Pardon and Salvation shall render him an everlasting Monument and Instance of the Riches of divine Grace. There is one more in whose eternal Redemp-

tion the Vertue and Efficacy of our Saviour's atoning Sacrifice and powerful Mediation shall be display'd. There is one more in whose Recovery to divine Life, the victorious Influence of his Spirit and Grace shall triumph for ever. There's one *Sheep* more added to the Fold of Christ, one *Follower* to his blessed Retinue, one *Member* to his mystical Body, whose future Dignity and Blessedness shall be an Accession to the Glory of his exalted Head and Lord, when he comes to be glorified in his Saints, and admired in them that believe on him, 2 Thess. i. 10. There's one *Temple* more for the Holy Spirit to dwell in; one *Vessel of Mercy* more to be prepar'd by his sanctifying Grace for the heavenly Glory. And, what will justify our highest Joy if this will not?

Nay, The more *profligate* a Sinner has been, his Conversion serves the more to illustrate the Glory of divine Grace. Towards such an one the infinite Mercy of God super-abounds in the Pardon of their multiply'd and aggravated Offences. Nay, the Efficacy of divine Grace does more signally appear, when it recovers such dead Sinners to spiritual Life; when it dispossesses Satan where he seem'd so strongly garrison'd; when it transforms a *licentious Prodigal* into a *dutiful Child*, and makes *obstinate Rebels* become a *willing and obedient People*; when it turns an *incarnate Devil* into an *incarnate Angel*; when it polishes the most rugged Tempers, and sets a Noble and God-like Stamp on those Souls in whom all the Relicks of the divine Image seem'd to be defac'd: And sure where the blessed God is so highly glorify'd, we should greatly rejoice, and shall do so, if his Interest be (as it truly should) infinitely dearer to us than any we can call our own. Nay,

2. The Conversion of a Sinner will appear to be a solid Ground of the highest Joy, if we consider the Benefit and Happiness that thereby redounds to himself.

The Conversion of a Sinner is an excellent and blessed Work, which truly divine Charity should dispose us to welcome the Tidings of, with the greatest Satisfaction.

If the temporal Good of others should be rejoyc'd in, much more their spiritual and eternal Welfare. If it be Matter of Joy when a *diseased Patient* is recover'd, when a *miserable Captive* is set at Liberty, when a *lost Sheep* is found; how much more, when a Sinner that is dead and putrifying in the Grave of Sin, is recover'd to divine Life; when a *Vassal of Satan* is redeem'd from his wretched Bondage; when a *Sheep of Christ* is rescu'd from the Paws of the great *Abaddon*; when an *Apostate Sinner* is happily brought back to his heavenly Father; and of a *Child of Wrath*, and *Heir of Hell*, becomes an *adopted Child of God*, and *Heir of Heaven*.

And this is more especially applicable to the Conversion of a *profligate Sinner*; because of such a One there seem'd to be little Hope left. And therefore the Conversion of such being the more surprizing and unexpected, is fitly represented (in all these three Parables in this Chapter) as occasioning a more sensible Transport of Joy. Thus the *Shepherd* was more sensibly affected and ravish'd with the Recovery of that one *Sheep* which he had given over for lost, than with the Safety of the *Ninety Nine* that had never been expos'd to so imminent Danger.

'Tis less wonder that divine Grace renews those whom it had long restrain'd; that it prevails on those whom pious Education had in some sort prepar'd to receive its Impressions and Stamp. But 'tis more amazing, and occasions a greater Surprize of Joy, when it conquers the strongest Opposition of corrupt Nature; when it causes the living Fruits of Righteousness to spring up in the most barren Soil; when it makes the heavenly Seed to pierce into those Hearts that seem'd as hard and impenetrable as the Rocks themselves. This may well occasion a more sensible Rapture of Admiration and Delight, as those imminent Mercies usually do that come most unexpected, and after we had almost despair'd of them. As doubtless the *Prodigal's* Return ravish'd his Father the more, because in his Thoughts he had given him over for dead and lost.

It now remains, that we make a more particular Application of this Subject.

And accordingly,

I. I wou'd hence address my self to all *unconverted Sinners*.

And to them I wou'd suggest the two following Uses of what has been said.

1. Hence reflect upon the Misery of your present State. You are here represented in my Text as *dead* and *lost*.

You are at present *dead* to that spiritual and divine Life which your Natures are capable of, and which is the Beginning and Seed of Life eternal. There's no saving Knowledge or Belief of divine Truths in your Minds; no gracious Inclinations towards God in your Hearts; no Disposition to your present Duty or future Blessedness. In respect of the Affairs and Interests of this Life you *live* and *act*; but in reference to those of your Souls and Eternity, there is no discernable Motion or Sign of Life. And you are going on in *Spiritual Death* towards *Death eternal*, being bound over thereto, by the righteous Sentence of the Law of God, and every Moment in danger of the Execution of it.

You are also represented as *lost*.

You are *useless* at present to all those excellent Purposes for which God made you reasonable Creatures; and the Design of redeeming Grace upon you has been hitherto frustrated: You are estranged from God, captivated by Satan and Sin, and in danger of *perishing for ever*.

And dare you stupidly persist in so woful and so hazardous a Case as this? Is this a State to rest satisfy'd and contented in? Will you not open your Eyes to see that Brink of Misery and Perdition that you stand upon? Will you not at last come to your selves, and entertain serious Thoughts and Resolutions of returning to God? But that leads me to add,

2. O be persuaded then to return to God, that it may be said of you, That tho' you were once *dead*, you are now *alive*; tho' you were once *lost*, you are now *found*.

Continue no longer *dead in Trespasses and Sins*. Resolve henceforth, that you will *live to God*, in Conformity to his Laws as your great Rule, in Pursuit of his Glory as your ultimate End. Implore his quickning Grace, that alone can form the Principles of divine Life in your Hearts. You have too long gone astray, and wander'd too far in the Paths of Death and Hell: O consider your Ways, and turn your Feet to God's Testimonies; make haste, and delay not to keep his Commandments. Return to Christ as the compassionate Shepherd and Bishop of Souls. Come back to his Fold, and resign your selves to the Dominion and Conduct of his Spirit and Grace.

And that I may persuade you hereto, give me leave to urge upon you this Argument suggested in the Text.

O consider, What a solid Ground your Conversion will be of the highest Joy.

The great God himself will rejoyce therein.

Even tho' you may have been perverse and heinous Sinners, yet if you will now return, There will be Joy in Heaven upon your Repentance, Luke xv. 7. A compassionate God does here represent his Bowels of Pity towards you, under the Emblem of an indulgent Father, who receiv'd even a returning Prodigal with a Transport of Affection and Joy. With such complacential Favour and Delight will a gracious God embrace a penitent Sinner, that with ingenuous Shame and Remorse casts himself at his Feet with unfeigned Resolutions of returning to his Duty. How will he that has no Pleasure in the Death of Sinners, but in their Repentance and Salvation, take Pleasure in such an Occasion to glorify his Mercy in the Forgiveness and Acceptance of a sincere Penitent that flees into his compassionate Arms! Nay, how will a merciful Redeemer rejoyce in the Salvation of a lost and perishing Sinner that comes to him for Refuge and Relief! How will the Holy Spirit rejoyce to make that Soul his living Temple, that has been formerly the Receptacle and Hold of unclean Spirits,

and the Nest of impure Lusts, but is now cleans'd and resign'd to the Conduct of his sanctifying Grace! In a Word, that blessed God, the Exercise of whose Mercy is his highest Delight, will be highly pleas'd in extending it to an Object that is now made capable thereof by a sincere Conversion to him.

Again, *Angels will rejoice in your Conversion.*

They are *ministering Spirits that minister to them that shall be Heirs of Salvation*; and therefore, behold the Success of the Grace of God in the Conversion of Sinners with the highest Complacency. *There is Joy (saith our Saviour) in the Presence of the Angels of God over one Sinner that repenteth*, Luke xv. 10. 'Tis welcome News to them, when any are deliver'd from the Powers of Darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of Christ; when any by converting Grace are added to the Family of God, and shall be their eternal Associates in the heavenly Kingdom. Both that ardent Zeal they have for the Glory of their Creator and Lord, and that warm Affection they have to their Fellow-Creatures, disposes them to receive the Tidings of a Sinner's Repentance with a Transport of Joy.

The Saints of God that hear of thy Conversion will rejoice in it.

For what can be more grateful News to them, than to hear of one *Fellow-Citizen* more added to their holy Community; one *Member* more to their *Society on Earth*, who shall with them make up the *general Assembly and Church of the First-born above*. Their Love to their blessed Lord must needs prompt them to rejoice when his Kingdom and Family is increas'd.

And the *Ministers of Christ* will greatly share in this Joy.

'Tis the greatest Discouragement imaginable to them, when they see their Labours unsuccessful, and their Hopes of your Conversion frustrated. 'Tis a sad Damp to their Spirits when their Calls to Repentance are slighted; and their most earnest Persuasions there-to make no more Impression on the Hearts of stupid Sinners, than if they spake to *inanimate Stocks*, or preach'd over the Graves of the Dead. But on the contrary, when their Ministrations are effectual; when *God's Israel is gathered*, and many Souls are brought Home to him; when the *Dead hear the Voice in his Word*, and are rais'd thereby to *spiritual Life*; when *lost Souls are recover'd*, and brought back from their miserable Wandrings to the *Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*: How does this revive their Hearts, and enlarge their Affections, and put new Life and Vigour into all their Attempts for the Salvation of Souls!

And now will you choose rather, by your continued Impenitency, to gratify Satan your greatest Enemy, or to please your wretched Companions in Sin, than by your sincere Repentance to minister such Occasion of Joy, both in Heaven and Earth? Should you not most readily do that, which will be so pleasing to the great God, so grateful to his holy Angels, so joyous to all his faithful Servants, and particularly to those that watch over your Souls, all of whom would entertain the News of your sincere Conversion with the highest Satisfaction.

Nay, let me tell you, you'll have the greatest Occasion to rejoice therein your selves, and will review this Change in your Nature and State, with the highest Satisfaction.

But that leads me,

II. To address my self to those that are converted to God, and to them I would suggest these two Things.

I. *Rejoice in your own Conversion to God.*

Often excite your thankful Joy in this happy Change by such Reflections as these.

"Once I was as others, dead in *Trespases and Sins*,
"but I am now quickned by the Grace of God. Once
"I was under the Power of *Blindness and Unbelief*, but
"now my Eyes are opened to see the Things that be-
"long to my everlasting Peace. Once I liv'd to my self,
"or rather to this *fordid Flesh*, but now I live to God,
"making his Glory my Aim, and his Laws my Rule.
"Heaven is now my End, and Holiness my Way and

Course. Now Faith, and Hope, and Love, and all the
"Graces of the Spirit of God are implanted in my
"Heart, which before was as a barren Soil, where
"only Ignorance, and Ungodliness, and worldly Lusts
"naturally sprung up. Once I was gone astray from
"God, and wandering in the Paths of Sin and Death,
"ready to perish for ever; but now I am return'd to my
"compassionate Father, and his Grace has led my
"Feet into the Paths of Peace and Life. O blessed be
"his Name that has glorify'd his Grace on a Sinner
"that deserv'd so much to be an Object of his Ju-
"stice! O blessed Day of his mighty Power, from which
"I may date my New-birth, and that spiritual Life
"which shall be the Seed of Life eternal! O happy
"Time, when divine Grace found me and brought me
"back to my gracious Father and merciful Redeemer!
Sure (my Brethren) we do not believe such a Change
to be made in our Nature and State, or we do not ap-
prehend how great and desirable the Change is, if we do
not rejoice in it, if the satisfying Persuasion of it do not
affect and ravish our Hearts, if we do not think our
selves unspeakably happy in the Favour and Family, in
the Embraces and Affection of our heavenly Father.

2. *Let us rejoice in the Conversion of others, and evidence we do so by our serious Endeavours to promote it.*

Let us rejoice in the Conversion of others. Let us long to hear those welcome Tidings of more dead Souls quickned by regenerating Grace, and more straying Sheep reduc'd to the Fold of Christ, and more disobedient Sinners turn'd to the Wisdom of the Just. Let us sympathize with the Interests of our Lord's Kingdom, and be rais'd or dejected accordingly as we see the great Work of Conversion to prosper or decline. Let us as the dutiful Children of our heavenly Father rejoice when his Family is increas'd, and when in his visible Church this or that Man is born to him. Let an ardent Zeal for the Salvation of others be the reigning Affection of our Hearts. Let us envy no Man the Grace of God. Let us not be like the elder Brother in my Text, that was griev'd at the welcome Reception of the returning Prodigal. Or like those unbelieving and uncharitable Jews (whom our Lord here censures) that envy'd the Conversion of the Gentiles to God, and their Admission into his Church and Family. We indeed have no Temptation to do so, who our selves are the Race of the Gentiles. But (my Brethren) let us rejoice in the Conversion of Sinners, whoever be the Instrument thereof. Let us rejoice when we hear of any being real Converts to God and Christ, tho' they be not Profelytes to this or that divided Party. Nay, let us reckon all such sincere Converts as our Brethren and Members of the same Community. If they be added to the Church of Christ, we should account them as added to us. For all true Christians (whatever smaller Differences there may be in their Opinions or Practices in lesser Things, or whatever distinguishing Names they go under) are Members of the same mystical Body, they are Denizens of the same City, and every true Convert to God and Holiness is an Accession to the Number of them.

And let it appear that we rejoice in the Conversion of others, by our compassionate Endeavours to promote it.

We have manifold Opportunities to do so by our Persuasions and Counsels, especially those of us that have others actually under our Authority and Inspection. O let us long to be the happy Instrument of turning some Sinner from the Error of his Way, and thereby saving a Soul from Death, and covering a Multitude of Sins, James v. 19, 20! Of bringing back some Prodigals to their heavenly Father! Let us with an holy Tenderness and Pity, warn such of their Dangers, and with a compassionate Violence, pluck them as Brands out of the Fire. Even tho' they turn a deaf Ear to our present Counsels, let us not be discourag'd and cease our Attempts. The Grace of God can reclaim a Prodigal after he has long run into all Excess of Riot.

There may be (some *molliora tempora fandi*) some happy Seasons in which our serious Persuasions may make deeper

deeper Impressions. Let us not then give them over, but imitate that merciful God who waits long to be gracious, and by the Riches of his Forbearance, still leads us to Repentance. And if we should at last prevail for the Conversion of any, we should have great occasion to rejoice in our Success. And that not only on the Account of the blessed God, whose Interest and Kingdom is thereby advanc'd, nor only on the Account of those Sinners themselves, whom we are instrumental to quicken when dead, and to recover when lost; but also on our own Account, when we consider that gracious Promise, *That they that are wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and they that turn many to Righteousness, as*

the Stars for ever and ever, Prov. xiii. 3. And thus I have finish'd what I had to offer to your Consideration, on the Parable of the Prodigal. And O that some poor Prodigals may from these Discourses, date their Conversion to their heavenly Father! May some of them come to themselves, and then they will entertain serious Resolutions of returning to him. And if any of you do, I assure you in the Name of God you may expect a most welcome Reception; and that there will be great Joy in the Family of God above, as well as that below, when a dead Sinner is made alive, and one that was lost is happily found.

S E R M O N XXII.

FAITH, the Principle of a Christian's LIFE.

GAL. ii. The last Clause of the 20th Ver.

I am crucify'd with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me. And the Life which I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. —

I Need not here enlarge on the high Eulogium which the Holy Scriptures every where give of divine Faith. You know how clearly the inspired Writer to the Hebrews ascribes all the memorable Instances of Piety and Holiness recorded concerning the Saints of the Old Testament, to this excellent Principle; and this pursuant to that general Assertion he had laid down, *That the Just shall live by Faith.* See Heb. x. 38. compar'd with the 11th Chapter throughout.

Nor shall I here consider divine Faith in its utmost Latitude, as a practical Assent to the whole of divine Revelation, but with a particular regard to our blessed Saviour as the special Object of it. We talk much of Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and justly esteem it as the great Work of God, which the Gospel enjoins as necessary to our partaking of that glorious Salvation it reveals. But I fear 'tis few, in Comparison, that are truly acquainted with the genuine Exercise of this divine Principle, and that can say with the Apostle in my Text, *The Life that I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God.* Nay, some seem very incautiously to assert, that the Duty of Faith in the Son of God, is never in Scripture inculcated upon those that have already embrac'd Christianity. Such seem to have forgot, that Christ must dwell in our Hearts by Faith, and that we must live under the continual Conduct and Influence of this radical Grace. And to represent to you the Necessity of doing so, will be the chief Purport of what I shall from these Words offer to your Consideration.

The Apostle Paul had told us at ver. 19. *That he through the Law was dead to the Law, that he might live to God, i. e.* He was convinced by the Precepts and Threats of the Law, of the Impossibility of being justify'd upon a Plea of sinless Obedience to it, that he might now live to God, whose Grace had open'd a new way of Justification and Life. And he adds at ver. 20. *I am crucify'd with Christ, i. e.* I have felt the Power of his Cross, in crucifying my Flesh with the sinful Affections and Lusts thereof, and in crucifying the World to me, and me to the World.

Nevertheless (saith he) *I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; q. d.* Tho' dead with Christ to the Flesh and the World, and to the Law it self (as to any hope of Justification by it) yet *I live a new Life; but 'tis a Life so entirely derived from Christ, and so absolutely devoted to him, that it cannot be so properly said, that I live, as that Christ lives in me.* His quickning Spirit being the Principle, his Laws the Rules, his Life the Exemplar, and his Glory the great End and Scope of my Life.

And then he adds in the Words of my Text, *The Life that I now live in the Flesh, I live by the Faith of the Son of God.*

The Words then offer this important Subject to our present Consideration, viz.

That Faith in the Son of God is the great Principle that has a powerful extensive Influence upon the Whole of a true Christian's present Life.

The Apostle could not have more significantly asserted the general Efficacy and Energy of divine Faith, than by thus ascribing the Whole of his Life to it.

He here speaks of that new and divine Life he liv'd, as now implanted into Christ, and made a living Member of his mystical Body; of this excellent Life, Faith in the Son of God was the active Principle, the Exercise whereof ran through every part of it.

In speaking hereto, I shall,

I. Consider this Principle of divine Faith, as it respects the Son of God as the special Object of it.

II. I shall shew, what a powerful extensive Influence this divine Faith should have upon the Whole of a true Christian's Life.

And the Subject being entirely Practical, I shall make no distinction between the Doctrinal and Applicatory Part of the Discourse.

I. I shall briefly consider this Principle of divine Faith, as it respects the Son of God as the special Object of it.

Now Faith in the Son of God being a Grace, seated not only in the Understanding, but the Will, includes in it such distinct Acts as these: As,

I. A prevailing Assent of our Mind and Judgment, not only to the Truth of the Gospel in general, but more

particularly to what it reveals concerning the Person, the mediatory Undertaking and Offices of the incarnate Son of God.

This Faith implies our unfeigned Persuasion of the Certainty of what the Scriptures declare concerning his Incarnation, his Life, his expiatory Sufferings and Death, his glorious Resurrection and Ascension, his prevalent Intercession, and the Administration of his mediatorial Kingdom, and his final Appearance and Coming. Again,

2. Our Faith includes in it a sincere Approbation of his blessed Design; a cordial Resolution to comply with it, and consequently an unfeigned Acceptance of him as our offer'd Saviour, and Consent to become his Disciples, his Subjects, his redeem'd People, and purchased Possession. By this Faith we embrace his great and precious Promises, and agree to his gracious proposed Terms. We come to him, to be justify'd by his Blood, and renew'd by his Holy Spirit, and freely take his (just and gracious) Yoke upon us. Again,

3. Our Faith further includes our ingenuous Trust and Affiance in him, as every way able and willing to accomplish all that he has undertaken in order to our Recovery and Salvation, Being persuaded of his All-sufficiency and Fidelity, we are thereby encourag'd to commit our Souls (by way of Depositum and Trust) into his safe and gracious Hands, as persuaded that he will keep what we have so committed to him to the great Day. By Faith we flee to him as our Refuge, and lay the stress of our eternal Concernments on his powerful and successful Mediation.

All these several Acts must concur to constitute a practical Faith on the Son of God, and they have a manifest and necessary Dependence on one another. The unfeigned Assent of our Minds to what the Scriptures declare concerning the incarnate Son of God, drawing along with it our Consent to receive him as our offer'd Redeemer, and our fiducial Trust and Dependence on him for whatever he has engag'd to do in order to the Restoring us to the Image and Favour of God, and to a state of consummate Happiness in the Injoyment of him.

I know indeed a late learned Commentator does with some Confidence assert, that the Scriptural Notion of Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ imports no more, "Than a full Assent to, and firm Persuasion of Mind, concerning the Truth of what is testify'd, reveal'd, or reported by God himself, or by Persons commissioned by him to reveal his Will, concerning Jesus Christ. Or briefly thus, 'Tis a firm Persuasion, that he who suffer'd at Jerusalem was the true Messiah, the Saviour of the World, the Prophet who was to come, that Person who was constituted Lord of all Things: Or which amounts to the same Thing, That he was Christ the Son of God. See Dr. Whitby's Preface to the Epistle to the Galatians.

That such an Assent to what the Gospel declares concerning our blessed Saviour, is the first and a very eminent Act of Faith in our Lord Jesus, I freely own. And that it was the principal Scope of the Apostle's Writings, to convince and persuade both Gentiles and Jews concerning those important Truths, will be as readily granted. And this is all that that learned Expofitor has prov'd. But I can by no means allow, that this is all that the Apostles designed to urge Men to, when they persuaded them to believe on the Son of God. Nay, I take it to be a dangerous Mistake to assert, that the Notion of Faith in him, includes no more than a firm Persuasion concerning those important Truths. For such a Persuasion of the Mind, how firm soever, would no way answer the Design of the Gospel, if it were not accompany'd with the Consent of our Wills, to receive the Son of God in all those Offices he is vested with, for accomplishing the great Work of our Salvation. And thus to receive the Son of God is the same thing in the Language of the Gospel with believing on him, John i. 12. Now we must not only receive him as a Prophet by our Assent to his heavenly Doctrine, (which is all that this Writer will allow to be meant by Faith in him.) But we must receive him as our rightful Lord Redeemer, by an unfeigned Subjection to his Authority; and we must

receive him as our High Priest and Mediator, by trusting to the Efficacy of his Sacrifice, and the Prevalency of his Intercession for our Pardon and Acceptance, and final Salvation. We must not only assent to the Truth of his Promises, but embrace them by a Consent to the Terms on which his promised Blessings are offer'd. Our Faith in him is also in Scripture described by coming to him, John vi. 35. viz. By coming to him, not merely as Disciples to our Teacher, but as diseased Souls to the great Physician of Souls, as guilty Clients to a powerful Advocate; as obedient Subjects to our rightful Lord, whose Yoke we are willing to take upon us; and as weary and heavy laden Souls, to him that can and will give us rest. See Mat. xi. 28, 29.

If it be said, that these other Acts do necessarily follow where there is such a firm Assent of the Mind, to what the Gospel declares concerning our blessed Saviour; I answer, though this were true, yet if such an Assent alone would never be accepted as true and saving Faith, without such a Consent and Affiance (as 'tis manifest it would not) then 'tis dangerous to leave these other Acts out of the Description of Faith: For we may conceive such a firm Assent without them. A Man may believe such a Physician both able and willing to heal his Distemper, and yet never come to him, because he is unwilling to use his Prescriptions. A Man may be suppos'd to be firmly persuaded, that Jesus is the Son of God, and the Author of eternal Life, (John i. 11, 12.) And yet with the young Man in the Gospel, be unwilling to consent to the self-denying Terms on which eternal Life is propos'd. He therefore that places the whole Notion of Faith in such an Assent of the Mind, gives at best but a lame and defective Account of it. For 'tis this Consent of the Will to accept that offer'd Saviour on his own propos'd Terms, that chiefly distinguishes a dead from a living Faith, and therefore should by no means be left out in the Description of it. Nor have we any reason to leave out that other Act of Affiance. For the Original Word ΠΙΣΤΙΣ chiefly signifies this Act of Trust, though it also include and presuppose the two former Acts of Assent to what the Gospel declares concerning our Saviour's Offices, and Consent to receive him as therein offer'd to us on his own gracious Conditions. I am sure the Apostle describes his Faith under that Notion of committing his Soul (as a Depositum and Trust) into the Hands of that powerful and faithful Redeemer, 2 Tim. i. 12. And to encourage such a Trust, our blessed Saviour represents himself as both able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, and as resolv'd to cast out none that come to him, Heb. vii. 25. John vi. 37. And therefore to represent these real Acts of Faith, as no way belonging to the scriptural Notion of it, is a matter of dangerous Consequence in practical Religion. Men should be wary of advancing such Criticisms as strip that Faith, which the Gospel lays so great a stress upon of what is essential to it, and can alone denominate it sincere and saving. 'Tis much safer to adhere to such a full and comprehensive Description of it, as has been already given.

Having given this brief Account of Faith in the Son of God, I come,

II. To consider, What a powerful and extensive Influence this Faith in the Son of God will have upon the whole of a true Christian's Life.

Now that we may take a more distinct and accurate View of the Life of a true Christian, while he is yet in the Flesh; let us consider it as reducible to these Heads.

First, We may consider it as a continual Contest against Sin, and Conflict with Temptations to it.

Secondly, As a continued Intercourse and Communion with God, in the immediate Duties of his Worship.

Thirdly, As an holy and useful Converse with Men.

Fourthly, As a continued Prosecution of the heavenly Glory.

Now with respect to every one of these, I shall shew you, of how admirable Use and Influence our Faith in the Son of God is, and how we are accordingly call'd to the Exercise of it.

First,

First, Let us consider the present Life of a Christian as a continual Warfare and Contest against Sin, and Conflict with Temptations to it.

I. Let us consider it as a continual Warfare and Contest against Sin.

And here we must exercise our Faith in the Son of God, in order to our Success in that spiritual Warfare.

1. Partly by frequent Contemplation of his dying for Sin, as the great Exemplar of our dying to it.

We must herein be spiritually conformed to our dying Saviour. We are therefore implanted by Baptism into the likeness of his Death, that we might in resemblance of him dye to Sin; that our old Man might be crucify'd, and the Body of Sin destroy'd. We should therefore thus reason with this blessed Apostle else-where, *How shall we that are dead to Sin, live any longer therein?* See Rom. 6. 2, 3. &c. And we should be the more sensible of the Necessity of such a spiritual Likeness to our dying Saviour, when we consider 'tis the most certain Evidence of our Relation to him, and our real Interest in the expiatory Virtue of his Death and Sacrifice. For none are Christ's, but such as have crucify'd the Flesh, with the Affections and Lusts thereof, Gal. v. 24. We shou'd therefore by Faith look often upon a crucify'd Jesus, as the excellent Pattern we should be conformed to, by being dead to the Flesh and to the World, as well as to all hope of Justification by the Mosaic Law. And this Consideration will have a powerful Influence, in order to the mortifying the Remains of indwelling Sin.

2. Again, We must by Faith consider our Obligation in point of Gratitude to our blessed Lord, to dye to Sin.

It was one great End that he proposed in his dying for Sin, that we might dye to it. He therefore bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, that we being dead to Sin, might live unto Righteousness, 1 Pet. ii. 24. Our Faith should therefore teach us to reason thus: Shall I that expect so inestimable Advantages by my Saviour's Death, wilfully counteract one of the great Ends that he died for? Shall I suffer those Sins to reign in my mortal Body, which he design'd to destroy, when he bare the Punishment of them in his own (Sacred) Body? Shall those hateful Lusts be harbour'd in my Heart, that were the Murderers of the Lord of Life? Shall not my grateful Affection to him, prompt me to execute the most inexorable Revenge upon those Sins that stabb'd him to the Heart, and had the deepest Hand in the shedding of his precious Blood? Shall I not bring them to his Cross, and nail them there, that they may there expire and dye? Shall I not by so reasonable a Compliance with the great Design of my dying Redeemer, express a just Sense of my unconceivable Obligations to him that thus loved me, and gave himself for me? And sure if we have any Ingenuity in our Temper, such Arguments as these should be of great Force and Weight with us.

3. Again, Let us by Faith draw Virtue from a dying and now risen Saviour, to enable us to dye more to Sin.

He by his Death has obtain'd for us that invaluable Gift of his Holy Spirit, by whose Assistance we must mortify the Deeds of the Body, Rom. viii. 13. Let us then look up to him for those more abundant Communications of his Holy Spirit, that are the precious Fruits of his Death. And through his gracious Aids we may expect, that this gradual Work of Mortification will go on with prosperous Success. The more we come under his powerful Conduct and Dominion, the Interest of indwelling Sin will sensibly decline, and gradually languish and expire. Let us then by Faith look up to the Son of God for that Efficacy and Virtue, that must enable us to resemble him by dying to Sin. Let us with the Apostle Paul, earnestly desire to know the Fellowship of his Sufferings, and to become herein conformable to his Death, Phil. iii. 10.

II. Let us consider our Christian Life, as a perpetual Conflict with Temptations to Sin.

And here our Faith in the Son of God will be of admirable Use to us, and particularly in the following Respects.

1. We are often prone to be dejected, when we are assaulted with grievous and hideous Temptations; we are apt to look upon them as certain Arguments of our Rejection by God. Thus 'tis frequent with the Tempter, where a melancholy Disposition gives him the Advantage to cast into the Minds of good Men Atheistical or Blasphemous Suggestions, and thence to sink them into woful Despondency, and to fill them with dismal Apprehensions of their own spiritual Condition.

But here the due Exercise of Faith in the Son of God may relieve us.

Let us by Faith look to a tempted Saviour, and we shall find that Temptations, even hideous ones, have been frequently the Lot of such as are most dear to God. 'Tis therefore no Sin, though it may be an Affliction to be tempted. For the Son of God himself had frequent Conflicts with the Powers of Darknests. He was assaulted with as horrid Temptations as any of his Followers. He was not only tempted to sinful Distrust on the one hand, and rash Presumption on the other, but even to no less heinous and blasphemous a Crime, than that of falling down and worshipping the usurping Prince and God of this World, who allur'd him thereto with an Offer of all the Glories of it. And how far any new Assaults of the Tempter, had an hand in those Agonies he endured in the Garden and on the Cross, we cannot certainly determine, but may make a probable Conjecture from his saying, concerning the time of his Sufferings, *Now is the Hour and Power of Darknests.*

And if all this be the spotless and dear Son of God, how little reason have we to think it strange, that he who durst attack our Head, should assail the Members too? Nay, how little ground have we to conclude, that we are cast off merely because we are tempted? For these unbelieving and blasphemous Thoughts, that Satan may inject into our Minds, when rejected with just Abhorrence, are not so much as our Fault, tho' they may be our great Trouble. And as such violent Storms of Temptations, serv'd only to illustrate the Power of our blessed Saviour in overcoming them, so they may only serve to render the Efficacy of his Grace the more conspicuous, by enabling the weakest of his Members to resist and repel them. But we see from his Example, that 'tis not inconsistent with the Love of our heavenly Father, to expose the dearest of his Children to the strong Assaults of the Tempter. But farther,

2. We are prone when we consider the Violence and Strength of Temptations, and our own Inability to resist them, to be thence discourag'd; so that we are ready to throw down our spiritual Arms in despair of Success, or are weaken'd in our spiritual Conflicts, through our own unbelieving Fears.

And here again, we must exercise our Faith in the Son of God, to encourage and animate our holy Resolutions. And if we look to our once tempted, but now triumphant Saviour, the believing Thoughts of him will inspire us with new Courage and Vigour.

We see in his Example, that the strongest Temptations we can meet with, are in themselves superable.

For they have been actually overcome by one cloath'd with our Nature, subject to all our sinful Infirmities, and in all Points tempted as we are, Heb. iv. 15. He endur'd the most furious Storms of the Tempter, when he had the most favourable Opportunity, and the greatest Advantage for making his Assaults upon him. See Matt. iv. He rejected his most alluring Offers, even when he propos'd no less specious a Bait, than all the Kingdoms of the World, and the Glories of them. He stood firm under the most violent Shock of Persecutions and Sufferings; enduring the Cross, and despising the Shame. These Temptations are not therefore insuperable to Flesh and Blood. They are not beyond the Strength of humane Nature, renew'd and sanctify'd by divine Grace, to resist and overcome. We should not therefore be discourag'd in our Christian Warfare by any such Apprehensions, as if our spiritual Enemies were invincible.

But if it be here objected, 'tis true, these Temptations were not insuperable to the Son of God, because though

though he was clothed with our natural Infirmities, yet he was free from those *Reliques of Sin* that cleave to us. He therefore might more easily conquer the Tempter, who found nothing in him that could give his Temptations any Advantage. Whereas the Victory may be very hard for us to obtain, who carry such dangerous Enemies in our own Breasts, to betray us into the Tempter's Hands.

Here again we must exercise our Faith on the Son of God.

We must look on him as the Captain of our Salvation, who has not only encouraged us in our holy Warfare by his own glorious Example, but has promised all necessary Assistance to us in our spiritual Conflicts. We must animate our selves by that Consideration and Argument the inspir'd Apostle suggests, that greater is he that is in us, than he that is in the World, 1 John iv. 4. We must consider that our blessed Saviour was therefore in all Things tempted like us, that he might be capable of being toucht with the feeling of our Infirmities, Heb. iv. 15. He can therefore exercise a more tender and sensible Sympathy with us, and has experimental Bowels of Pity towards us: So that having suffer'd through Temptation, he is the more able to succour them that are tempted, Heb. ii. 18. We must therefore by Faith look up to him for Grace to help in the time of need. We must beg of him that he would strengthen us with all Might according to his glorious Power, Col. i. 11. That as he overcame the World, he may make us Sharers in his happy Victory; nay, that he would make us more than Conquerors over all our spiritual Enemies, that nothing may ever separate us from his Love, Rom. viii. — That he who has spoil'd Principalities and Powers himself, would also bruise Satan under our Feet. That he the merciful Shepherd and Bishop of Souls, would keep those Souls we have committed to him in his powerful Hands, out of which none is able to pluck us, John x. 28. And indeed, we might well despond when call'd to wrestle, not with Flesh and Blood, but with Principalities and Powers, &c. If we were to encounter them with our own unassisted Force, if we had not these supernatural Succours, these auxiliary Forces from Heaven, to expect and rely on. Once more,

3. We are sometimes baffled by Temptation, and through our own Carelessness and Security, through our own Instability and Inconstancy, betrayed into dangerous Falls. And this sometimes sinks us into wretched Despair; so that like a foyled Enemy we are ready to yield up all, and have no Heart to rally and renew the Combat.

Here then we have great need to exercise our Faith on the Son of God.

We must therefore in this Case consider him, as in all Things made like to his Brethren, that he might be a merciful High-Priest, to make Reconciliation for the Sins of the People, Heb. ii. 17. We must indeed use the utmost Care, to prevent any such wilful Sinning, as foreseeing the bitter Effects it will produce. But in case of our being foyled, we must not through wretched Despair give all for lost: We must be solicitous to rise again, by a speedy and deep Repentance; and must then remember, That if any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, even Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the Propitiation for our Sins, 1 John ii. 1, 2. We must by Faith consider, that there is yet Efficacy enough in the Redeemer's atoning Blood, to wash away our Sins of the deepest Dye, when truly repented of; and that there is yet Strength in him sufficient to recover us from our most dangerous Falls. So that our Case is not hopeless, there is a Possibility of our being both recover'd to Repentance, and restor'd unto Favour, if we make early Application to the Mercy of God, through our blessed Mediator.

Thus must we exercise Faith in the Son of God, thro' the whole of our present Life, considered as a perpetual Warfare and Contest against Sin, and continual Conflict with Temptations to it. But,

Secondly, Let us farther consider our present Life, as

a daily Intercourse and Communion with God, especially in the Duties of his Worship.

And with respect thereto, we have daily occasion for the lively Exercise of Faith in the Son of God.

And that on such Accounts as these.

1. In all our serious Addresses to God, we are apt to be discourag'd by the Apprehensions of that infinite Distance there is between him and us. The lively Thoughts of so awful and tremendous a Majesty are ready to overwhelm and confound us: So that we can scarce believe that he will vouchsafe to converse with, or have any regard to the Services of such vile and despicable Worms as we are.

To relieve us under these Apprehensions, we must by Faith look up to the Son of God, that bright Image of the invisible Deity (as he is styl'd by this Apostle, Col. i. 15.) And the Thoughts of God manifested in the Flesh, will be more familiar and encouraging to us. His dazzling Glory is as it were temper'd and accommodated to our View, as it shines to us in the Face of his incarnate Son. And sure we cannot doubt God's Readiness to converse with Man, when he therefore took upon him our Nature, that he might encourage our free Access to him; and came down to us that we might in our devout Thoughts and Affections more freely and familiarly ascend to him. And as nothing can dispose us more for delightful Communion with God, than to be assur'd of his tender Love to us, and to have our Hearts influenc'd with Love to him; so in order thereto, we must by Faith look up to the blessed Jesus, that greatest Gift and brightest Mirrour of divine Love; and in him we may behold such a clear Discovery and Demonstration of the unparallel'd Love of God, as may both enkindle in our Hearts the most fervent Affection to him, and give us the greatest Ground of ingenuous Affiance and Trust in him. How does he love us, who when we loved not him, sent his own Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins? 1 John iv. 10. How infinitely tender were his Affections to us, when he spared not his own Son that he might spare us, but delivered him up as a Victim and Sin-offering to his Justice, that we might be embraced in his Arms of Love! Nay, how has he lov'd us, who has cancell'd all our past Guilt, adopted us into his Family, and sent the Spirit of his Son into our Hearts, as the Earnest of our heavenly Inheritance? And how should all these Assurances of his ardent and matchless Love remove all our suspicious and misgiving Thoughts? Nay, how should the Contemplation of our having such a Mediator with him, embolden us to come to him with ingenuous Hope as a reconciled Father, as the God of Peace, as the Father of Mercies, and the God of all Consolation! Heb. xiii. 20. 2 Cor. i. 3. To what end has he appointed such a Mediator, but that we may now with filial Freedom draw nigh to him? Nay, how comfortable an Emblem and Pledge has he given us of our Communion with him, in the unconceivable but strictest Union of our human Nature to the eternal Word, in order to the constituting him a suitable High-Priest and Mediator for us?

2. Whereas we are prone to be discourag'd, with the Sense of our frequent Indisposition for those holy spiritual Duties, in which we should converse with God; Nay, whereas we are conscious of manifold Defects and Failures in the best of them, we are thence apt to fear, that an infinitely Holy God will never accept so defiled Offerings and Services as these are.

Now against this Discouragement we must be relieved by the Exercise of Faith on the Son of God.

When we are conscious of our great Indisposition for those holy Duties and frequent Deadness in them; we must by Faith look up to the Son of God, the Head of all vital Influence, and the Repository of divine Grace. We must derive from him more abundant measures of that Spirit of Adoption, that will enable us to cry, Abba Father, Rom. viii. 15. And that blessed Spirits in all our Prayers and Praises will help our Infirmities, ver. 26. (by giving us a clearer Discovery, and more feeling Sense both of our Necessities and our Mercies; by exciting our

our ardent *Desires* and fervent *Gratitude*; by enlarging all holy *Affections*; by assisting and elevating our natural Faculties to more vigorous Exercise in those holy Duties.) Nay, to him we may also look by *Faith* as a *Pattern* of fervent *Devotion*; even to him who pray'd with strong Cries and Tears, who continued whole Nights in that heavenly Exercise, and by an elegant Parable instructed us to pray always without fainting, see Heb. v. 7. Luke vi. 12. Luke xiii. 1.

Are we conscious of manifold sinful *Defects* and *Failures* that cleave to our Duties, and therefore under Doubts and Fears about their *Acceptance* with God? We must here seek *Relief* by the believing Contemplation of our great *High-Priest*, through whom all our *Spiritual Sacrifices*, when offer'd in Sincerity, shall be accepted by God, 1 Pet. ii. 5. We must look up to him as *perfuming* all our imperfect Offerings with the *Incense* of his *Merits*, Rev. viii. 3. He is worthy, though we are most unworthy. There is sufficient *Virtue* in his *Blood*, even to expiate the *Iniquities* of our holy Things; and sufficient *Merit* in his perfect *Obedience*, to recommend our defective Duties to the divine *Acceptance* and *Reward*. We come in his Name to the Father, and not in our own; and on his Account we are assur'd, That whatever we ask in his Name, (according to the Will of God) shall be granted, John xiv. 13. xvi. 23. Having then such an *High-Priest* over the House of God, and such *Liberty* to enter into the *Holiest*, through the *Blood* of Jesus, in that new and living Way consecrated for us; let us draw near with a true Heart, in full Assurance of Faith, having our Hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience, and our Bodies washed with pure Water, Heb. x. 19, 20, &c.

But to proceed,

Thirdly, We may farther consider the Life of a Christian, as an holy and useful Converse with Men.

And that it may be so, the Exercise of our Faith on the Son of God, will be of admirable Use to us. For,

1. We must, by Faith, set him before us, as the most glorious Exemplar and Pattern, of such an eminently holy and fruitful Conversation.

Let us, by Faith, look to the incarnate Son of God, and see with what ardent Zeal he promoted the Glory of his heavenly Father; insomuch that 'twas justly said of him, That the Zeal of his House had eaten him up, John ii. 17. i. e. Had entirely taken up his Thoughts and Affections, and engross'd his Time and Cares. And he himself could herein appeal to God, and say, Father, I have glorified thy Name, John xvii. 5. How accurate, how affectionate Obedience did he pay to his heavenly Father, who could say, It was his Meat to do his Will, and that he always did the Things that pleased him? John iv. 34.

What a God-like Propension had he, to all Acts of beneficent Kindness and Love, of whose daily Conversation we have that amiable Description, That he went about doing good? Acts x. 38. His whole Life was, as it were, one continued Act of Compassion, to the Bodies and the Souls of Men. Nay, what an ardent Desire was he inflam'd with, of promoting the Salvation of Souls; who besides the unwearied Labours of his Life in his personal Ministry, thought not his precious Blood too great a Price to be paid for their Redemption? How amiable a Pattern was he of Mortification and Contempt of the World; of deep Humility and Lowliness of Mind; of admirable Patience and Meekness; of unmoved Constancy under the greatest of Injuries and Sufferings, and of a forgiving Spirit towards the unjust Authors of them? Let us then often, by Faith, contemplate these Graces, as they shone in him with so amiable and bright a Lustre, that we may thence reproach our selves with the Decays of our Zeal and Love, and with the Barrenness of our comparatively unfruitful and unexemplary Conversation. Faith should continually present this beautiful unblurred Copy to our Eye, that our Life may be a fairer Transcript of it. And O how powerful Motives should it suggest to us, to aspire to a nearer Conformity to him, whose Followers we pretend to be, that the same Mind may be in us, that we may tread in his Steps, and walk

even as he walked, Phil. xi. 5. 1 Pet. xi. 21. 1 John xi. 6. Again,

2. Our Faith must derive from him as our Vine, those vital Influences that shall enable us to abound in these Fruits of Holiness.

We must go about even all our relative Duties in a Dependence on his Strength; we must perform them as a Service to him, as well as expect through him the Acceptance of them. We must thus do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Col. iii. 17. We must draw vital Spirits from him our mystical Head, to capacitate us his weak Members for our particular Function and Service, according to the particular Place and Station we bear in his mystical Body. Without him we can do nothing; but through him strengthening us, we shall be enabled to do all Things, John xv. Phil. iv. 13.

Fourthly, Let us consider the Life of a true Christian, as a continued Prosecution of the heavenly Glory.

And here our Faith in the Son of God will be of admirable Use to us. For,

1. We are prone to entertain too doubtful Apprehensions of the Life to come. The Glories of that future World are invisible to us, and seem to be a great Distance from us. And our unbelieving Minds are sometimes ready to regard them as uncertain Things; so that thro' the Weakness of our Faith, they do not make those powerful Impressions they should upon us.

Now, here we must exercise our Faith on the Son of God. We must look on him that came down from Heaven to reveal the unseen Glories of it to us, and to give us the most satisfying Assurances of their Reality and Certainty. 'Tis he has abolish'd Death, and brought Life and Immortality to light, 2 Tim. i. 10. 'Tis he has publish'd that new and everlasting Covenant, establish'd on better Promises, even those of an heavenly Inheritance, Heb. viii. 6. 'Tis he has actually risen from the Dead, and visibly ascended into Heaven, that his glorious Resurrection and Ascension might be the Earnest, the Pledge and Security of ours. 'Tis he has entered as our Fore-runner within the Vail, Heb. vi. ult. and is gone into his Father's House, to prepare a Place for us in those Mansions of Glory. 'Tis he that intercedes for us, that those whom the Father has given him may be where he is, and may behold his Glory, John xvii. 24. 'Tis he has promis'd to come again, even to raise up these mortal and corruptible Bodies, to a State of Incorruption and Glory, that Death may be entirely swallow'd up of Life. And shall we not credit a Revelation of the Life to come, that is so agreeable to the obscurer Notices of the Light of Nature, so worthy of the blessed God to make, and that is brought us by so glorious and credible a Messenger as his incarnate Son, who has given us such satisfying Assurances and Pledges of it? Sure it should be our Language, Lord, I believe, help thou my Unbelief. Again,

2. We are too prone to entertain dark, as well as doubtful Apprehensions of that future State. Our Strangeness to the unseen World, to its glorious Inhabitants, to their way of Living, and of mutual Converse, nay, to the whole of their State, does greatly abate the Ardour of our heavenly Desires and Hopes.

To remedy this, we must live by Faith in the Son of God.

And indeed the lively Contemplations of him as the Lord of the invisible World, will greatly help to familiarize it to our Minds. Let us behold him there exalted in our Nature, as the Head of Angels as well as glorified Saints. And why should we think strange of going to that blessed Saviour, whom we are conscious that we have sincerely lov'd and serv'd, and trusted in? Why should we think strange of going to those Spirits of just Men made perfect, many of whom have been the dear Companions of our Faith and Hope here below? Nay, why should we be shy of the Converse of those glorious Angels, that have been ministering Spirits to us, while we were Heirs of Salvation here on Earth? What though we know almost as little of their way of Living and Acting, as the Child in the Womb does of the Affairs of this World; 'tis sufficient that our blessed Lord knows

it for us; that he is gone to prepare a suitable Place for us in those heavenly Mansions; that he has the Keys of the unseen World, as well as Death; that his Angels shall safely convey our departing Spirits into his blissful Presence, so that when we are absent from the Body, we shall be present with him. If we can now love him, though we never saw him; if our Faith in an unseen Saviour can now enable us to rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory: Sure it should make us long to go where we shall see and enjoy him, whom our Souls love!

3. We are prone to entertain discouraging Apprehensions concerning our own Title to the heavenly Glory. And these tend to abate that spiritual Joy, which the Prospect of it should fill our Hearts with.

From these uncomfortable Doubts we must be reliev'd, by the lively Exercise of Faith in the Son of God.

Sometimes our Hopes of that future Glory are damp'd by the Pressure of our Afflictions and Miseries here. And we can hardly think that if God had design'd us to be the Heirs of that heavenly Felicity, he would expose us to so manifold Calamities and Straits here.

To relieve us against this, we must look by Faith to the Son of God, who, though Heir of all Things, was here expos'd to such Poverty and Indigence, that he tells us, *Though the Foxes had Holes, and the Birds of the Air had Nests, yet the Son of Man had not where to lay his Head.* He, though design'd for a State of the highest Exaltation, yet was here under the lowest Degree of Abasement; was a Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Griefs. He, though he now wears the brightest Crown, yet once endured the Cross, and pass'd through Sufferings unto Glory. 'Tis no wonder then that those should be conform'd to him in his Sufferings, who are design'd to be Sharers in his Glory. 'Tis no unusual Thing for those to receive their evil Things here, for whom everlasting Consolation is reserv'd. Again,

Sometimes the Sense of our great Unworthiness damps our Hopes, especially when we consider the comparative Unsuitableness of our Temper to that heavenly State and Life.

But here we must exercise Faith in the Son of God. We must consider Heaven not as a Debt, due to the intrinsic Excellency and Dignity of our Services, but as the Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. 6. ult. We must expect it as a Reward of Grace. We must hope for it as an Inheritance to which we are adopted, by Virtue of our Relation to our blessed Saviour, Rom. viii. 17. We must consider, that though sincere Holiness be necessary to make us meet for that Inheritance of the Saints

in Light, yet perfect and sinless Holiness is not requir'd to entitle us to it. We may therefore look for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal Life. And we may rely on him for the continued Assistances of his holy Spirit, to carry on the great Work of Sanctification, that is preparatory for our final Salvation. He that has begun that good Work in us will finish it.

And to add no more. Whereas the Apprehensions of Death and Judgment in the Way, are apt to render the Thoughts of our future State less comfortable; we must be reliev'd against them, by the lively Exercise of Faith in the Son of God.

And, O how comfortably may we, even under the prospect of Death, look up to him, who has by Death destroyed him that had the Power of Death, and delivered them who through fear of Death were all their Life-time subject unto Bondage, Heb. ii. 15. He has, by his Death, taken away that guilt of Sin, which is the Bitterness and Sting of Death, 1 Cor. xv. 55. He has given us the fullest Assurance, that Death shall be entirely abolish'd, and Mortality swallow'd up of Life: And, O how should it allay the Terror of Death to be persuaded, that we encounter it as a disarm'd and conquer'd Enemy that Christ has triumph'd over, and assur'd all his Followers of an entire Conquest of! Nay, how should it sweeten the Thoughts of Death to consider, that if for us to live be Christ, to dye shall be (great) Gain? Phil. i. 23.

And sure it should relieve us against any frightful Thoughts of Judgment, to look by Faith to our blessed Redeemer himself as our final Judge. We can never think he will condemn those by his final Sentence, whom he has here justify'd by his Blood. He will never charge their Guilt upon them, who have with a penitent Heart fled to him as their only Refuge and Propitiation; nor will he ever exclude those from his heavenly Inheritance, whom his sanctifying Grace has prepar'd for it: No, all such may expect to hear that Doom from him, which his gracious Lips once pronounc'd on Earth, *Come ye Blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepar'd for you, from before the Foundation of the World,* Mat. xxv. 38.

Thus must we live by the Faith of the Son of God.

And it should be a very powerful Incitement thus to live to him, when we consider him, as him that loved us, and gave himself for us. We thus owe the whole of that Life to his Glory and Service, which he has bought at the Expence of his own. And indeed a lively Faith in him, will enable us to feel herein the sweet and irresistible Constraints of his Love.

S E R M O N XXIII.

On the Love of GOD.

M A T T. xxii. 35, 36 37, 38, 39, 40.

- 35 *Then one of them which was a Lawyer, askt him a Question, tempting him, and saying,*
 36 *Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law?*
 37 *Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.*
 38 *This is the first and great Commandment.*
 39 *And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*
 40 *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* —



THE Words I have read contain the noblest Subject in practical Religion; of which if we could speak with the Tongue of Angels as well as Men, our Discourses could neither exhaust it, nor indeed rise up to the Dignity of it.

We may from this excellent Passage clearly see, how justly our blessed Saviour declares, that he came not to *destroy the Law, but to fulfil it*, Mat. v. 17. He is so far from discharging his Followers from the Observance of the moral Law, that he has not only clear'd the true Extent, and vindicated the Perfection of it, but has enforc'd our Obedience to it, by all the most powerful Motives that can be drawn, either from the Obligations of redeeming Love, or from the Prospect of eternal Rewards and Punishments. And because an accurate Enquiry into all the particular Branches of the Moral Law is a laborious Work, that requires Time and Study; our blessed Lord has in condescension to our Weakness, with admirable Wisdom reduc'd the Moral Law to these two comprehensive Heads, as the Summary of it. And indeed a due Contemplation of these two Commands will lead us into, and facilitate our Discovery of all the particular Duties requir'd either in the first or second Table. And for these two, 'tis no way difficult for Christians of the lowest Form in the School of Christ, either to apprehend the Meaning, or to discern the Reasonableness and Equity of them. And O that it were as easy to persuade you to the due Observance of them! I shall, by divine Assistance, attempt to do both in the following Discourses.

To clear my way thereto, I need only take notice of the Occasion of these Words of our Lord, which I have now recited.

We read in the Verse foregoing the Text, *That when the Pharisees heard that our Saviour had put the Sadducees to silence, (viz. by solving their vain Objection against the Resurrection) they were gather'd together; and one of them being a Lawyer, askt him a Question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law?*

The Quarist was in respect of his Sect a Pharisee; but in respect of his Employment or Profession a Lawyer; either a publick Expounder and Teacher of the Law in the Synagogue, or one that taught it more privately in some School. I shall not now debate, whether a Scribe and

a Lawyer were the same Office, or whether (as some suppose) the former's Talent lay chiefly in resolving speculative Points, the latter in resolving more practical Cases. Nor need we be solicitous in our Enquiry, whether his tempting Christ implys here, his having a malicious Design to entrap and ensnare him; or his only intending to make a Tryal of his Wisdom and Skill, in the resolving this important Question. Though if this Lawyer be the same with the Scribe mention'd in Mark xii. 28, &c. 'Tis more probable by the ingenuous Temper he discovers, that he proposes this Question rather with an honest, than with an ill and malicious Design.

As to the Question it self, *Which is the great Commandment?* No doubt, the meaning of it is; *Which is the Greatest?* The Positive being put for the Superlative Degree, as is usual in the Language the Jews then us'd. And therefore in the Evangelist Mark, the Question is, *Which is the first Commandment?* i. e. In point of Importance and Dignity.

'Tis highly probable, this was a Question much debated at that time among the Jewish Doctors; we know some of them have given the Preference to the Command about Circumcision; others to that relating to the Sabbath; others to the Law about their Sacrifices: To which Opinion the Answer of the Scribe in the Evangelist, Mark xii. 33. seems to refer.

But our Saviour's Answer we have in the Text.

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, &c. This is the first and great Commandment.

And he adds, *The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self: on these two hang all the Law and the Prophets.*

So that our Saviour sums up all the Duties both of the first and second Table, in these two great and extensive Commands: and this with admirable Wisdom in condescension to the Narrowness and Imperfection of our Understandings, that the most Ignorant might have before their Eyes at once, both a plain, and yet a very full and comprehensive View of their Duty, both towards God and towards Men. How easy is this compendious Summary of practical Religion and Holiness to be not only remembred, but competently apprehended and understood? How justly might the Prophet say, *He hath shewed thee, O Man, what is good, and what the*

Lord requires of thee, even to do justly, to love Mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Micah vi. 8.

So has our Lord more plainly reveal'd what the divine Law chiefly enjoins, viz. *To love the Lord, &c. and to love thy Neighbour, &c.*

Not that we must imagine, that this great Duty of loving God, does in its formal Notion include all other Duties of the first Table, such as *fearing him, Subjection to him, Faith and Trust in him*; or the external Duties of Prayer, Thanksgiving, bearing his Word, &c. 'Tis only imply'd, that the Love of God is the radical Principle of all other Duties to him, which are chiefly acceptable so far as they are actuated and influenc'd by this.

And indeed, none was more fit to inculcate this great Command of divine Love than the Son of God, who came from the Bosom of the Father, to bring us the most bright and astonishing Revelation of the Amiability and Love of God, as the powerful Attractive to our Love of him; and who sends his holy Spirit into our Hearts, to form in us this filial Affection to our heavenly Father.

And O that that blessed Spirit may shed abroad that divine Love abundantly in our Hearts, while we speak and hear of it! May that comprehensive Law that was once wrote in Tables of Stone, be now engraven on the fleshy Tables of our Hearts! May we, as the two Disciples, while our Saviour is here speaking of divine Love to us, find by happy Experience that our Hearts burn within us, those holy Flames being enkindled there!

I shall therefore begin with the first Branch of the Text, viz.

That to love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, is the first and great Commandment.

In treating on this excellent Subject I shall consider, First, *The Commandment it self.* And, Secondly, *The Importance and Excellency of it*, intimated to us in our Saviour's calling it, *The first and great Commandment.*

First I shall consider, *The Commandment it self*, viz. *To love the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.*

And here we may distinctly consider,

- I. *The Object of our Love, the Lord our God.*
- II. *The Act of loving him, and what is included therein.*
- III. *The Extent and Measure of the Duty commanded, to love him with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.*

Of these in their Order: And,

- I. Let us consider, the Object here propos'd to our Love, viz. *The Lord our God.*

And by these Expressions he seems to be represented as the proper Object of our Love, both consider'd in himself, and in the Relation he stands unto us.

1. He is the proper Object of our Love consider'd in himself.

He is the Lord, or Jehovah, a self-existent, independent, eternal and every way most perfect Being. He is an infinitely glorious and amiable Majesty, of unlimited Power, of unsearchable Wisdom, of boundless Goodness, of unspotted Purity, of inflexible Justice, of unchangeable Truth and Faithfulness, &c.

In his adorable Nature all those Excellencies and Beauties, all those Perfections and Glories even in their highest Exaltation and Lustre, are to be found as in their Source and Centre, that can possibly recommend any Being to our highest Love. So that a superlative Affection to him, is a Tribute which the incomparable Amiability of his Nature gives him a just Title and Claim to, from all those to whom he has imparted a reasonable Nature capable to discern it. Nay, he deserves a Love as infinite as the Excellency of his own Being, if we were capable of paying it to him, much more does he deserve the utmost of what we can give. Who should be lov'd, if not he that is in the highest Measure, or rather without all Limit and Measure, possess'd of every Thing that is truly lovely, and capable to attract a rational Affection? And indeed, the

more our Love of God arises from the Contemplation of his own Perfections, the more we love him on the Account of what he is in himself, our Love is the more disinterested and pure, and aspires the nearer to its due Height and Perfection: Of which more hereafter.

But,

2. God is the proper Object of our Love, consider'd in his Relation to us.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God.

Now as he may be styl'd our God, both in respect of that common Relation he bears to all Mankind, and in respect of that special peculiar Relation he bears to all good Men; so under both he is most deserving of our superlative Love.

He is a proper Object of our highest Love, as he is the Author of our Beings, and we are the Work of his Hands. A superlative Affection is due to the Father of Spirits from his own Offspring. And much more is he the deserving Object of our tenderest Love, as he is the gracious Preserver and Benefactor of our Lives, and the Fountain of all our Mercies. To him our best Affections should be consecrated, from whom we have deriv'd not only our Being and Life, but all the necessary Supports and Comforts of it.

He is yet the more deserving Object of our Love, as he is our God by peculiar Relation; as he is the gracious Restorer of our lapsed Nature by Jesus Christ our blessed Mediator, and thro' him our reconcileable God. And yet much more as he is our actually reconciled Father, Redeemer, and Sanctifier; our God in the Bonds of an everlasting Covenant, and our Portion and Happiness for ever. And 'tis indeed our Apprehensions of God as standing in such a spiritual Relation to us, that most powerfully diffuse this Love to him in our Hearts, and raise it to the greatest Height and Fervour. We shall then most ardently love him, when by the Spirit of Adoption we are enabled to cry, *Abba Father.* Of which more hereafter. But,

- II. I come to consider the Act it self, of loving God, and what is included therein.

Now the general Notion of Love includes various Acts both of the Mind and Will, according to the various Grounds of it in the Object lov'd.

If we regard the Excellency of those we love, our Love imports our high Esteem of them; if we regard their Capacity of being beneficial to us, our Love imports either our earnest Desire of enjoying them, or our Complacency and Delight in it: If we regard their Love to us, and the beneficial Fruits of it, our Love includes affectionate Gratitude; if we regard the Interest of the Person lov'd, our Love includes our Good-will thereto.

And all these several Acts concur in our Love to God. As,

- I. Our Love to him includes our high Esteem and Veneration for him, on the Account of his infinitely amiable Excellencies.

For all Love supposes some Excellency we apprehend in the Object lov'd. And even the abstracted Excellency of an Object is sufficient to recommend it as amiable, tho' we our selves enjoy it not: As the excellent Qualities of a worthy Person should oblige us to honour and love him tho' at never so great a Distance from us, and incapable to lay any particular Obligation upon us. But our Will and Affections can never be carried out towards an Object, which our Judgments do not apprehend some attractive Amiability in.

The first Step therefore of divine Love, is a profound Admiration of the infinitely blessed God as the first, the greatest, and the best of Beings. We love him, when we entertain adoring Thoughts of him as the Centre and Spring of all amiable Perfections; when the Rays of his transcendent Beauty and Excellency, shining out in the Works of Nature, Grace, and Glory, affect and ravish our Minds, and represent him to our Thoughts, as a Being of matchless Glory, to whom none is like or can ever be compared. We are then indeed ready to cry out, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee, and there is none upon Earth that I desire besides thee,* Psal. lxxiii. 25.

And

And indeed if the dark Shadows of borrow'd and finite Excellency that appear in our Fellow-Creatures, can so powerfully attract our affectionate Esteem, how much more should the amazing Brightness and Lustre of his infinite Perfections do it? How unconceivably amiable do his Works and his Word represent him to us! That Almighty Power, that infinite Wisdom, that unlimited Goodness that first made and form'd, and does still sustain and rule this vast Universe, and diffuses its beneficial Emanations to all the Parts of it, that spotless Purity and Justice that appear in the Administrations of the divine Government, but especially that admirable Wisdom and unparallel'd Grace that shines out in the great Work of our Redemption and Salvation. All these Attributes concur as so many Strokes to pourtray to us the amiable Glory of God. And yet even these are but (as he calls them) *his back Parts rather than his Face*, *Exod. xxxiii. 23.* Yet on the Account of them, what Reason have we to say, *O Lord our God, how excellent is thy Name in all the Earth! Psal. viii. 9.* We must therefore form in our Minds the most magnifying and honourable Thoughts of him. He must appear in our Eye as altogether and incomparably lovely; and not only lovely on the Account of his glorious Perfections absolutely consider'd, but also relatively as they represent him to be a most *sutable Good* to us; for so he must be esteem'd and valu'd if we pretend to love him. Which leads me to consider,

2. Our Love to God, as it regards him as a *sutable Good* to us.

Our Apprehensions of the Excellency of an Object, usually excite in us some proportionable Desire to secure a Propriety in it, and gain the Possession of it; and when 'tis possess'd, they raise in us a proportionable Satisfaction and Delight in it. We love a valuable Friend or Relation, when we desire the most intimate Union and Converse with them, and take great Pleasure in what we do enjoy of it.

Thus our loving God includes,

Our earnest Desire of a Propriety in him, of the most intimate Converse with him, and fullest Enjoyment of him. For Love aspires to the Fruition of the Object lov'd, and carries out the Soul in intense Desires after it. We then love God, when we earnestly breathe after an Interest in him as our reconciled God and Father; when we, above all Things, desire to stand on good Terms with him; when we covet his loving Kindness and Favour as the best of Blessings; when we ardently seek the strictest Alliance and Union to him; when we vehemently long for those peculiar Communications of his Grace, which he vouchsafes to those that are the Objects of his delightful Love; when we fervently desire to know, to resemble, and to enjoy him more. When as the Hart pants after the Water-Brooks, so do our Souls pant after God, *Psal. xlii. 1.* thirsting for the refreshing Streams of his Love; when our Souls tend with vigorous Motions towards him as the Centre of their Rest, in whose Protection and Care, in whose Amity and Communion they place their highest Happiness here, and in whose immediate Presence and Converse they expect the Perfections of endless Joy and Bliss.

Even such ardent Desires towards God does divine Love kindle, as will render our Distance from him afflictive and grievous. Love renders the Separation or Absence of its Objects uneasy to us. And thus when the Children of God either enjoy his Presence in a very imperfect Degree, or find their wonted Converse with him interrupted, that Love to him that cannot express it self in Delight and Joy, will vent it self in Sighs and Tears. Thus when holy Souls want the Benefit of those publick Ordinances wherein they were wont to enjoy so sweet Intercourse with God, their Love will appear in such sorrowful Complaints and Moans as those of the Psalmist, *My Soul thirsts for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God? My Tears have been my Meat Night and Day, &c. When I remember these Things I pour out my Soul in me; For I had gone with the Multitude, I went with them to the House of God,*

&c. Psal. xlii. 23. &c. If any wilful Offences have eclips'd the Light of God's Countenance, and reduc'd their Souls into disconsolate Darkeness, their Love to God will vent it self in ingenuous Grief and Self-abbhorrence, in earnest Cries for renewed Pardon and Peace; such as those of the devout Psalmist: *Hide thy Face, O Lord, from my Sin, and blot out mine Iniquities; Make me to hear the Voice of Joy and Gladness, that the Bones thou hast broken may rejoice, &c. Cast me not away from thy Presence, nor take thine Holy Spirit from me.* If they apprehend themselves under any divine Desertions, how does holy Love extort from them such earnest Expostulations as those, *Why castest thou off my Soul? Why hidest thou thy Face from me?* Their Estrangement and Distance from God, they resent as a most undesirable and disconsolate State; and therefore are restless till they have by renewed Repentance recover'd their Freedom of Access to God, and their delightful Intercourse with him. And alas! How often do our Miscarriages and Folly occasion our divine Love to vent it self much more in our lamenting his Absence when withdrawn from us, than in our delighting in the reviving Sense of his gracious Presence with us.

But our Love to God consider'd as a *sutable Good* to us, does also include our highest Delight in him, so far as we can discern our Interest in him, and have, even here, some imperfect Enjoyment of him.

What we love we are pleas'd in the Possession of. Love implying the Complacency and Rest of the Soul in the Object belov'd so far as 'tis enjoy'd. And, we then truly love God, when our Souls tend towards him as their exceeding (and satisfying) Joy; when we value our Interest in him, and our Expectations from him above ten thousand Worlds; when we relish his Loving-kindness as better than Life, and feel more reviving Gladness diffused into our Hearts by the Light of his Countenance, than by the Affluence of all earthly Enjoyments; when we take the highest Pleasure in the nearest Approaches to him, and taste that satisfying Bliss in the peculiar Communications of his Grace and Love that nothing else can yield; and when the lively Hopes of our endless and full Fruition of him is to our Souls the sweetest Foretaste of heavenly Joy. Nay, as Men usually rest satisfy'd in possessing what they principally love, whatever else they may lose, or want, so will divine Love prompt us to rejoice in God, even tho' earthly Comforts should fail, from a clear Persuasion that he alone is our All-sufficient Portion and Happiness, *Hab. iii. 17, 18.* Nay, as human Love endears to us all Occasions of conversing with those we have a strong Affection for, so will divine Love render all Opportunities of Access to God and Intercourse with him delightful to us. We shall approach with Joy to his Courts, and account one Day spent there, better than a thousand elsewhere, *Psal. lxxxiv. 10.* One Hour's Communion with him will be preferable to an Age spent in Vanity and Sin. We shall account it good for us to draw nigh to him, and be ready with the Psalmist to call to others, *O taste and see that the Lord is good! Psal. xxxiv. 8.* But,

3. Our Love to God as it is occasion'd by the Benefits we derive from him, includes ingenuous Gratitude.

For not only the Excellency of a Person, but his particular Goodness to us, is a just Ground for our Affection to him. And the greater Obligations he has laid upon us, they should endear him the more. What is the Ground of that ingenuous Love that Children bear to their Parents? Is it not, that from them they have derived their natural Life, and on their Care and Love they depend for the Preservation and Supports of it? So that their Love includes a grateful Sense of the Benefits they have receiv'd. And how much more then should our Love of the blessed God, our greatest and best Benefactor, include in it the most thankful Resentment of the innumerable Benefits we have derived from him, the Fountain of all our Good. We then truly love him, when all his manifold and admirable Mercies, which he daily surrounds us with, and showers down upon us with a liberal Hand (notwithstanding all our Unworthiness

things and Mis-deserts) leave a deep Impression upon our Hearts, and engrave an indelible Law of Gratitude there. We then love him, when we carry in our Breasts that ingenuous Affection towards him, that an indigent Beneficiary and Client owes to his gracious Patron and Benefactor; that a pardon'd Rebel owes to his gracious reconciled Sovereign; and that a forlorn Wretch can owe to him that should freely advance him from a State of the lowest Want and Misery, to a State of the highest Dignity and Honour, Glory and Blessedness. And indeed, did but our grateful Love to God bear Proportion to the Greatness or the Number of his Benefits, to how immense a Sum would it rise! Of which more in the Application.

4. Our Love to God as it respects his Interest, imports our Good-will to it, and Zeal for it.

Love does necessarily import Good-will to the Object lov'd; and therefore prompts us to wish the Welfare of those we love, to do what lies in our Power to promote it, and to obviate the contrary; and it renders their Welfare and Satisfaction highly pleasing to us.

'Tis true indeed, we are no way capable of expressing our Love to God in a strict Sense, by promoting his real Welfare; our (narrow finite) Goodness cannot extend to him. He stands in need of no Services from his highest Creatures, to heighten his real Felicity. He is abundantly enrich'd with his own infinite Fulness, and requires Obedience from us, as a Means, not to his Happiness, but our own. But yet, out of his infinite Condescension and Goodness, he is pleas'd to speak of some Concernments and Interests as if they were his own. Some Things he declares to be highly pleasing, and others to be no less offensive to him. Thus the Manifestation of his own Glory in the Recovery of laps'd Sinners to his Favour and Image, and in their final Salvation, is in his Account and Language his great Interest. He declares himself highly delighted with every Thing that tends to the Advancement thereof, as a Service done to himself, and expresses a just Displeasure against the contrary, as the greatest Dis-service and Injury to him. He declares himself pleas'd, when his just Laws are reverenc'd and obey'd; and grievously offended, when they are insolently despis'd and trampled on.

Now our Love to God will express it self both in our affectionate Concern to promote what he accounts his Interest, and in our Delight in the Success and Advancement thereof.

Our Love to God includes our affectionate Concern to promote what he is pleas'd to account his Interest. We then love God, when his Interest and Glory are infinitely dear and valuable to us, even dearer than any that the Flesh can call our own. When we not only ardently wish for the Advancement of his Cause, and the Increase of his Kingdom, but are ready to contribute our Utmost towards it: We then love God, when we earnestly desire and endeavour, that the glorious Designs of his Grace may be crown'd with the most prosperous Success, that the good Pleasure of his Will may be fulfill'd, and that he may be more universally known and honour'd, serv'd and obey'd in the World: And when whatever is opposite hereto, is most grievous and afflictive to us, we then love him when we our selves are solicitous that our Desires, our Aims and Endeavours may entirely conspire with his; and are ready to sacrifice any fleshly Interests of our own, when they stand in the least Competition with the superior Interests of his Glory and Service. We then love him, when with our blessed Lord we account it our Meat to do his Will, John iv. 34. and have our Hearts enlarg'd to run the Way of his Commandments (with all Alacrity), Psal. cxix.

Nay, our Love to God includes our Delight in the Advancement of what he accounts his Interest and Glory.

We then truly love him, when our Wills are regularly inclined to him as our ultimate End; when the Glorifying him, and pleasing of his Will is in our practical Esteem most amiable: So that we even delight in our own Happiness, chiefly as 'tis a Means to this higher

End. For indeed, as our own and others Felicity is but a subordinate End to the honouring and pleasing of God, so we must not chiefly love God, as that is the Means to our Felicity, but value and delight in our Felicity, as it is a Means subservient to his Glory and Pleasure. That is in it self chiefly amiable, and therefore should be the chief Object of our Delight and Love. And indeed, this is the noblest Pitch and Height of truly divine Love, when we thus love God chiefly, in and for himself, making the Manifestation of his Glory, and the fulfilling of his good Pleasure, the chief Object of our Complacency and Satisfaction.

Having explain'd the Act of loving God, I come to consider farther,

III. The Extent and Measure of the Duty here enjoyn'd, viz. To love him with all our Heart, with all our Soul, and with all our Mind.

I shall not be so curious as to go about to distinguish these three Expressions, and assign a different Sense to every one of them. 'Tis usual in Scripture to multiply Expressions of the same Import for inculcating a Thing with greater Vehemence. And in the Evangelist Mark, 'tis with all the Understanding, Soul, and Strength, Mark xii. 33. Those Expressions may indeed refer to the three Faculties of the Soul, its Understanding, Will, and executive Power. And doubtless all of them must concur in this excellent Duty.

Some indeed have rais'd a Doubt, whether this Command of loving God with all our Heart, &c. enjoyn the Perfection, or only the Sincerity of our Love to God? But I see no Reason for doubting; but that,

On the one Hand, this Command does enjoyn perfect Love as our unquestionable Duty.

For the Law of God is a perfect Rule of our Duty, suited to Man in his innocent State; and God has not lost his Right to command, because Man has sinfully lost his Disposition to obey. The Law of God being the Transcript of his own Purity, must require the highest Degree of Love to God, that our reasonable Nature is capable of paying: For no less is due, and whatever falls short thereof, is culpably imperfect.

But on the other Hand, there is no doubt, the Command (as mitigated by the Indulgence of the Gospel-Covenant) requires only Sincerity of our Love to God, as the Condition of our Acceptance and Reward.

'Tis therefore the sincere, not the perfect Love of God, that is the Christian's Attainment and Character: And in the Language of the Gospel, those love him thus with all their Heart, &c. who love him in Sincerity. He that might in strict Justice exact the Perfection of our Duty, is pleas'd to overlook our involuntary Weakness, and graciously to accept the Integrity of our devout Affections. And how admirable a Favour is this, that when our perfect Love is really an Offering so much below his Notice; he disdains not our unfeigned Love, tho' attended with many sinful Defects?

I shall therefore chiefly consider these Expressions as they describe the Sincerity of our Love to God, and shew what they contain as requisite thereto.

But since the full Prosecution of this Head would carry me beyond my present Bounds, I shall close this Discourse with the following Reflection on what has been said.

Is the Loving the Lord, &c. the first and great Command? Then,

I. We may hence admire the infinite Condescension of the blessed God.

For what less than infinite Condescension could move that glorious Majesty, who is his own infinite Happiness, and stands in no Need of us, thus to court the Affections of poor despicable Worms, from whom he can expect no Advantage; nay, by whom he has been extremely injur'd and dis-oblig'd? That so excellent a Being, rais'd infinitely above us, by the Perfections of his own Nature, and his sovereign Dominion over us, should yet invite us to a filial Love of him, and make that happy Temper of Soul our principal and most important

tant Duty. That he should be willing to receive so mean an Offering as that of our Love, and put so great a Value upon it! Especially when we consider, that the great Thing he seeks in our Love to him, is the Occasion of letting out upon us the fullest Emanations and Streams of his beneficent Love, and thereby making us for ever happy in the Enjoyment of himself! And 'tis indeed the highest Advantage and Dignity of our reasonable Nature, that we are capable of beholding the attractive Glory of God, and of loving that infinitely amiable Being. So that this Command enjoins us a Duty, which it is at once our Honour and our Happiness to be employ'd in.

II. We may hence infer, that if Love to God be the first and great Command, then Hatred of him is the most heinous Sin.

'Tis one of the black Characters given of the Generality of the degenerate Heathen World, that they were Haters of God, Rom. i. 30. And God threatens to visit the Iniquity of the Fathers on the Children, to the third and fourth Generation of them that hate him, Exod. xx. 5.

And this Enmity against God, is the most poisonous Ingredient in the most enormous Acts of Disobedience and Wickedness. This is the Sin that chiefly renders Devils so odious and accursed Creatures, that they are possess'd with so inveterate a Malignity against the blessed God; that they hate his holy Nature and Government; that, were it possible, they would strike at his Being, and do, at least, wish for the Extinction of it. And tho' 'tis but a few, and those the worst of Men, that here arrive to so dreadful a Height of open Enmity against God, as Devils are acted with; yet all wicked Men have the same cursed Principle in them, and would hate the blessed God as much as any of

those accursed Fiends, if they felt as much of his inexorable Justice, and did as entirely despair of his Mercy as they do. For their carnal Mind is truly Enmity against God himself, thro' its irreconcilable Enmity to his holy Law: And our Enmity against God is in this more inexcusable than that of Devils, that we have no such Temptation to it as their hopeless Condition suggests to them. And O what a horrid Sin is it, for us who are the Work of his Hands, to hate him in whom we live, and move, and have our Being! For us who are his Subjects, to hate that infinitely gracious God, who daily endeavours to overcome our Evil with his Good; who by the Riches of his Long-suffering and Goodness, daily leads us to Repentance! And who by the marvellous Discoveries and Tenders of infinite Love, strives to conquer our disaffected Hearts, and melt them into ingenuous Love!

No Deformity in our Bodies can be more monstrous than this Deformity in our Souls. What a dreadful Thing is it to turn away the Eye of our Minds from that Father and Fountain of Light that shines with so bright and attractive Lustre! What a dismal Thing for a Sinner to come to that Height of Malignity, as to hate the very Thoughts of God, and even wish the Annihilation of his Being! A Wish infinitely more unreasonable and abominable, than for a Man to wish the Light of the Sun were extinguish'd. For his Being and Perfections are infinitely more necessary to the Well-being of the intellectual World, than the Light of the Sun to this sensible World. In a Word, to hate the blessed God, is a Sin of the first Magnitude; 'tis the most dreadful Instance of the deep Depravation of our Nature; 'tis the most hideous and detestable Lineament of the Devil's Image.

S E R M O N XXIV.

On the LOVE of GOD.

MATT. xxii. 35, 36, 37, 38.

- 35 Then one of them which was a Lawyer, asked him a Question, tempting him, and saying,
 36 Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law?
 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.
 38 This is the first and great Commandment.



HAVE already, from these Words, made some Progress in the Prosecution of that important Subject which they contain, viz.

That to love the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, is the first and great Command.

In speaking hereto, I have already consider'd, First, The Command it self.

And here I both consider'd,

I. The Object of our Love, the Lord our God: And,

II. The several Acts that are included in our Love to him: And,

III. The Measure and Extent of our Love, viz. That we must love him with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.

And having, in the former Discourse, premis'd, that tho' this Command does enjoin the Perfection of divine Love as our unquestionable Duty; yet, as mitigated by the Indulgence of the Gospel-Covenant, it requires only the Sincerity of our Love, as the Condition of our Acceptance and Reward.

I come now therefore to consider these Expressions as they describe the Sincerity of divine Love.

Now in order hereto,

I. 'Tis requisite, that our Love to God be superlative.

It must incomparably exceed our Love to any other Being whatsoever; and our Affection to the best of Creatures must be entirely subordinate to that we bear to the great Author and Maker of all.

I know, indeed, a late learned Writer confidently asserts, "That we must not love God and our Fellow-Creatures

"Creatures with the same kind of Love at all; that we may indeed love them with a Love of Beneficence and Good-will, but must love none but God with a Love of Complacency and Delight". And this Assertion he founds upon a philosophical Speculation, viz. "That God alone is the immediate Author of all our pleasing Sensations, and therefore should be the only Object of our Delight". But as this Speculation it self is at least but uncertain and dubious, (for we who know so little of the Frame and Constitution of our own Bodies and Souls, can hardly be able to determine, whether external Objects may not have some instrumental Efficiency, in producing in us such pleasing Sensations as we actually experience in our selves) so I see no Foundation that this Inference from it has in the holy Scriptures: Nay, their Language seems no way consistent with this Opinion. The Scriptures seem every where to allow us a moderated Delight in all our present Enjoyments: They permit us to rejoice in that Portion of temporal Good, which is the Fruit of our Labour, and of the divine Blessing, Eccl. v. 18, 19. ix. 7, 8, 9. They allow us to rejoice in our desirable Relations and Friends, tho' it must be in a Degree so comparatively low, as if we rejoiced not, 1 Cor. vii. 30. They condemn not all the Pleasure we relish in sensible Good, but only our being Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God; [*φιλήσωμι μάλλον ἢ φιλοθεοί*] 2 Tim. iii. 4. Nay, they recommend to us the genuine Use of such inferior Objects of our Delight, viz. That the Sweetness of these Streams should lead up our Affections to God as the Fountain of all Good: That these good Gifts should endear that Father of Lights from whom they come; and that the Pleasure we taste in them, should raise our Souls to higher Delight in him the supreme and all-satisfying Object of our Happiness.

What then this Command enjoins as to the Measure of divine Love, is, That the great God have the Sovereignty in our Affections; that he be enthron'd in our Hearts; that no created Object whatever, be admitted to stand as a Rival with him for our Esteem, our Desire, and Delight: That no Creature be allow'd to have any other than a subordinate Place in our Affections; that all the Satisfaction we relish in any finite Good, be subservient to excite our more ardent Desires towards him, and to raise us to the Expectation of full and consummate Felicity in the Enjoyment of him. And indeed, it were the greatest Affront we could offer to him, to give the best of Creatures the Preference before him. This he justly brands as an heinous Crime, as a forsaking him the Fountain of living Waters, to seek our Satisfaction in broken Cisterns that can hold no Water, Jer. ii. 13. He challenges the Empire of our Hearts; 'tis his positive Demand, My Son, give me thy Heart, Prov. xxiii. 26. He does not reckon himself (in an acceptable manner) lov'd at all, where he is not lov'd above all. Even Father and Mother, Brethren and Sisters, Wife, Houses, Lands (and whatever is amiable and dear to us here below) must in our Affections be so far postpon'd to him, as to be hated in comparison of him, Matt. x. 27. Luke xiv. 26. Every Object must be abhorr'd and renounc'd that would pretend to stand in Competition with him. He must be to our Souls their only sovereign Good, their satisfying Portion, the only Centre of their everlasting Rest. Tho' he does not monopolize our Love, yet he does claim a peculiar unrival'd Degree of it. But,

2. 'Tis requisite to this Sincerity of our Love to God, that we should still aspire to higher Degrees of it, and strive against the culpable Defects of it.

We must love him with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind; and therefore breathe after, and be tending towards the Height and Perfection of divine Love.

We must so love him, as never to think we do love him enough; and must therefore never sit down satisfy'd with those imperfect Degrees of divine Love that we have attained. He does not love God as he ought, who imagines that he loves him as well as he deserves; who does not sensibly own and lament the Failures and Laguer of his devout Affections, and in whom that divine

Flame is not ascending higher and higher. For our Love to God should, like the glorious Object of it, have no Bounds set to it. The only Measure in our Love to him, is to love him without Measure. Our Understandings should aspire to more admiring adoring Thoughts of him; our Wills should be carried towards him with a stronger Bent and Propension; we should tend towards him with insatiable Desires; we should endeavour to relish more of satisfying Delight in him, and long for that State, where the clearest Discoveries, and fullest Communications of the Love of God shall excite and enable us to love him, according to the utmost of our finite Capacity.

Having thus consider'd the Command it self, I now proceed,

Secondly, To shew, on what Account our Saviour declares this Command of loving the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, &c. to be the first and great Command.

I. Let us consider, on what Account 'tis call'd the first Command.

Now 'tis justly call'd the first Command.

1. As 'tis the First in Order and Dignity.

It belongs to the first Table of the Law (being a comprehensive Summary of it, as I shall shew more fully anon;) and 'tis every way congruous, that that sacred Rule of Righteousness should first enjoin and regulate our Love to God, as the best of Beings; to whom our Obligations are infinitely greater than to all the World, and, who is the Source and Spring of all those Perfections that can entitle any Being to our rational Love. Nay, among the Duties of the first Table, this justly challenges the first Rank and Place. For, when once our Minds entertain any futable Apprehensions of his amiable Excellencies, and his endearing Relation to us, as the Author of our Beings, and the Fountain of all our Mercies. The first Tribute that the Contemplation thereof calls us to pay, is that of our affectionate Veneration and Gratitude. His attractive Glories challenge the one, his admirable and undeserved Benefits give him a just Claim to the other Act of Love. The first Sacrifice such a reasonable Creature should pay to its glorious Maker and Benefactor, is, to offer up it self to him in the Flames of Love, and make him a Tender of his Heart. Our superlative Love (how mean a Thing soever it may be in it self, yet) is the best and greatest Present we can make, and therefore should be first tendered to the best and greatest of Beings. Nay,

2. This is justly call'd the first Command in respect of its causal Influence, viz. Because our Love to God is the Principle of all regular Love to any other Being.

We must prefer the Cause before the Effect. Our Fellow-Creatures are no farther amiable, than as they bear some Likeness and Resemblance to him. And we must love them for that natural or moral Image of his that is enstamp'd upon them. We must love them as they are his Creatures or his Children. If we love them on the Account of the intellectual Powers they are endued with, 'tis because they bear some Resemblance to him, as he is the Father of Spirits. If we love them on the Account of their Graces and Vertues, these are the Lineaments of his Image; these are that divine or God-like Nature which his regenerating Grace has implanted in them. Their Excellencies being all borrow'd and deriv'd from him, they can pretend to no more than a secondary Place in our Love: They are only so far amiable as they shine with the Rays he darts upon them. And we must first love him that begat, before we can love those that are begotten of him. We must therefore first love him above all, that we may know how to proportion our Love to all other Objects. For all other Beings must be lov'd for his sake; and our Love of them must both be (as was observ'd before) subordinate and subservient to our Love of him. But,

II. Let us farther consider, Why 'tis call'd the great (or as we may justly render it the greatest) Command.

Now 'tis deservedly call'd, by way of Eminency, the great Command.

1. In respect of its comprehensive *Extent*, as it ver-
ally includes all other *Acts of Piety* towards God.

As the Apostle justly observes, concerning the Du-
ties of the *second Table*, that they are fulfill'd with this,
Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self, Rom. xiii. 9. I
may say the same concerning the *Duties of the first*,
that they are some way comprehended in this, of loving
the Lord our God with all our Heart, &c.

Our Love naturally vents it self in our *admiring ado-
ring Thoughts* of him. Do we pray to him? 'Tis our
Love that enlarges our Hearts in ardent *Desires* towards
him, and prompts us to a filial *Affiance* and *Trust* in
him. Do we praise him? 'Tis our Love that inspires
us with such a high *Veneration* of his amiable *Excellen-
ces*, and with such a grateful *Sense* of our *Obligation*
to him for his numberless undeserved *Benefits*. Do
we hear his Word? 'Tis our Love to him that moulds
our Hearts into an *obediential Frame*, and prompts us
to a ready *Compliance* with his *Pleasure* and *Will*. Do
we act for the *Advancement* of his *Kingdom* and *In-
terest*? 'Tis Love that inflames our Hearts with such
an active *Zeal* for his *Glory*. Our filial *Fear* of him
springs from our ingenuous *Affection* to him, and is the
genuine *Effect* and *Fruit* thereof. And well may divine
Love be reckon'd the *principal Duty* of the *first Table*,
when it thus runs thro' and animates all the rest, and
is, as it were, the *Life* and *Soul* of them.

2. 'Tis call'd the *great Command*, in respect of the
Value which the blessed God puts upon it.

He lays so great a *Stress* thereon, that he estimates
all other *Duties* by the devout *Affection* from which they
spring: And all other *Duties* without this, are as un-
acceptable to him, as it would have been under the Mo-
saick Law, to offer a dead *Christ*, instead of a living
Sacrifice. Our most regular *Supplications* and *Petitions*
without those holy *Desires* towards God, which divine
Love inspires, would be in his Account no better than
the *Shell* of *Devotion* without the *Substance*. And should
we celebrate his *Praises* in the most elegant and lofty
Strains, if they were not run'd by Love, we should be to
him but as the *sounding Brass*, and *tinkling Cymbal*; 1 Cor.
xiii. 1. Nay, the Apostle adds there a strange *Sup-
position*, of a Man's bestowing all his *Goods* on the *Poor*,
and giving his *Body* to be burnt, and yet without *Charity*
or divine Love, this would profit him nothing, Ver. 3. No
Liberality to Men will be acceptable, that springs not
from the Love of God; and a Man's giving his *Body* to be
burnt, will not denominate him a true *Martyr* in God's
Account, if he do not offer up his *Soul* too in the *Flames*
of Love. The most comprehensive *Knowledge* of divine
Mysteries is so far valuable, as it serves to inflame our
devout *Affections* towards the blessed God; and Faith
it self is so far acceptable as it works by Love, Gal. v. 6.
Love is the *End* which Faith and Hope are but the
Means to promote. And no external *Acts of Obedience*
can recommend us to God, that are not animated by
this divine Principle. No spiritual *Oblations* and *Sacri-
fices* can be pleasing to him, that are not offer'd on the
Altar of a devout Heart, and kindled by this *Fire* from
above. Whereas the meanest *Offering* we can bring
(when futable to our real Ability) will be graciously
receiv'd, when presented with the sincere *Affection* of
the *Offerer*. As we see in the favourable Acceptance
that the poor *Widow's Mite* met with.

Once more.

3. This is justly call'd the *great Command*, on the
Account of its powerful *Influence* on the whole Course of our
Obedience.

'Tis true indeed, that our *Hope* and *Fear* are very
potent Springs of our *Actions*, and derive a mighty
Force from those *Promises* and *Threatnings* of God,
which are the Sanction of his Law, and set before us
the strongest Motives to Obedience. But yet their In-
fluence is not comparable to that of divine Love. 'Tis
chiefly divine Love that renders the Service of God
our deliberate Choice, and our highest Delight; 'tis this
ingenuous and generous Principle that enlarges our Hearts
to run the Way of his Commands with the greatest Alacri-

ty. To a Soul animated by divine Love, the Commands
of God are no more grievous, 1 John v. 3. His Yoke is ea-
sy, and his Burden is light, Matt. xii. 30. Love makes
us esteem his Service our truest Freedom. It does, by
a sweet but sovereign Efficacy, constrain us to our Du-
ty. It inspires us with a laudable Ambition and Zeal
to approve our selves to the Eye of God. It renders
the Difficulties and Hardships of our Obedience easily
superable, and carries us on it with continued Pleasure;
enabling us even to rejoyce in Tribulations, and to
count it Matter of our Honour and Joy when our Zeal
and Fidelity is try'd by any Sufferings in the Cause of
God. In a Word, the Progress we make in our O-
bedience, will always bear a Proportion to the Strength
and Vigour of this gracious Principle, from which it
chiefly springs. And well may this be call'd the great
Command, when this divine Love is the Principle that
most powerfully prompts us to the Observance of all
the rest.

I now come to the practical Improvement of this im-
portant Subject. And,

I. We may here admire the infinite Condescension of God,
in making so excellent a Duty as this, the Matter of his
first and great Command.

II. We may hence infer, That if to love the Lord,
&c. be the first and great Command; then Hatred of him is
the most heinous Sin.

To these two Heads I have spoken in the former
Discourse; I now proceed,

III. If to love the Lord our God, &c. be the first and
great Command, then this should put all of us upon the most
serious Enquiry, whether we sincerely comply with it.

If this be the chief and most comprehensive Branch of
the Law of God, it highly concerns us to see that it
be written on the fleshy Tables of our Hearts. And there-
fore 'tis a Matter of vast Importance to manage this
Enquiry aright. We can with no Certainty conclude
our own Interest in the peculiar Favour and Love of God,
without discerning the Sincerity of our Love to him.
Here therefore we have the greatest Occasion for deep
and impartial Reflections upon our predominant Tem-
per and Frame towards God. To assist and direct you
in this Enquiry, let me urge you to propose such Que-
stions as these to your own Consciences.

Is my Love to God transcendent and superlative?

Do I love him above all? Can I truly say with the
devout Psalmist, Whom have I in Heaven but thee? And
there is none upon Earth that I can desire besides thee, Psal.
lxxiii. 25. Do I esteem his loving Kindness as better than
Life? Psal. lxxiii. 3. Do I relish more Satisfaction in
the Sense of his Favour, than in the Affluence of all
temporal Enjoyments? Is the Light of his Countenance
more reviving to me, than the Increase of Corn and Wine?
Psal. iv. 7, 8. Will no temporal Blessings yield me any
true Contentment without the Sense of his peculiar
Love? Can I rejoyce in that, even when all outward
Comforts seem to fail? Heb. iii. 27. Does all the
Sweetness I taste in created Enjoyments lead up my
Affections to God, and dispose my Soul for higher De-
light in him as the only Fountain of all Good? Do I
not suffer the World to stand as a Competitor with God
for my Heart? Does nothing here below rival him as
the Object of my highest Satisfaction? These are com-
fortable Evidences that thy Love to God is sincere.

Again,

Do I lament the Imperfection and Defects of my Love to
God? Does nothing shame and grieve me so much
as that I can love that infinitely amiable Being no more?
Am I aspiring to higher Degrees of ardent Affection
to him? Do I endeavour by frequent Meditation to
blow up this Spark of divine Love into a brighter Flame?
Or on the contrary, do I put off the blessed God with
a transient Glance of my Eye, and with a sudden Flash
of devout Affection that is no sooner kindled, but it ex-
pires and dies?

Again; enquire,

What do I daily feel of the genuine Motions of divine
Love, especially in my religious Transactions with God?

Do

Do I often meditate upon him? Do I gladly embrace all Opportunities of conversing with him? Do I relish the most satisfying Delight in drawing nigh to him? Do I earnestly desire to know, to obey, to resemble, and to enjoy him more? Do I breathe after more of the sanctifying Influences of his Grace to inflame my Affections towards him, and after the Discoveries of his pardoning Mercy, and Assurances of his special Love? Do I value an Interest in him above all the World, and aspire to the full Fruition of him as my only satisfying Felicity? When such gracious Emotions as these towards God, are, as it were, the daily Pulse of our Souls, 'tis an Evidence that our Love to him is sincere: Whereas we have just Reason to question all our Pretensions to it, when we are in a great Measure Strangers to such pleasing admiring Thoughts of God, such warm Desires towards him, such Breathings after delightful Communion with him; such an high Valuation of our Interest in him, &c.

Again; enquire,

What genuine Effects does divine Love produce? Does it powerfully prompt me to keep his Commands? Does it render me above all Things solicitous to approve myself to his All-seeing Eye? Does it possess me with an holy Care to please, and a filial Dread to offend him? Does it carry me with Alacrity in a steady Course of Obedience, and turn my Work and Duty into Pleasure and Delight? Does it inspire me with an active Zeal for the Glory and Service of my blessed Lord? Does it enable me to postpone, nay, freely to sacrifice my fleshly Ease, or worldly Interest, whenever it comes in Competition with his superior Interest? Does my Love to him controul and regulate my Affection to all inferior Objects? These are comfortable Evidences of the Sincerity of it. But we have just Reason to suspect all our Pretensions to divine Love, when 'tis destitute of these genuine Fruits. For that is the most unerring Character of sincere Love to God, which the inspir'd Apostle delivers; *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments*, 1 John v. 3.

Once more.

Is the Love I pretend to God the powerful Principle of fervent Affection to all those that bear his Image? Does it endear all those on whom I see this amiable Stamp of his imitable Perfections? Does my Love to him that begets, prompt me to love those that are begotten of him? Are his Saints in my Esteem the excellent ones of the Earth, in whom is my Delight? Psal. xvi. 2. And we are the more concern'd to try our selves by this Character, because the Scriptures lay so particular a Stress upon it. *If a Man say, I love God, and hates his Brother, he is a Liar. For he that loves not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* 1 John iv. 20. q. d. If we love not that imperfect Copy of the imitable Excellencies of God that appears to our View in his Children, how can we pretend to love the invisible Original?

By such Characters as these, we may judge of the Sincerity of our Love to God. And O how highly are we concern'd to accomplish a diligent Search, that we may be upon good Grounds enabled to appeal to the Heart-searching God, concerning the Sincerity of our devout Affection, in the Language of Peter to our blessed Saviour, *Lord, thou knowest all Things, thou knowest that I love thee*, John xxi. 17.

Now since all Mankind are divided into these two opposite Ranks, those that sincerely love God, and those that love him not; I shall accordingly,

IVthly, Address myself to those of you, who, upon impartial Enquiry, have just reason to conclude, *That you are devoid of that sincere and superlative Love to God which is requir'd by this first and great Command.*

And sure it should startle and awaken your Consciences, to think that you are chargeable with such heinous Guilt as this. If those be inexcusable that willfully break the least of God's Commands; how much more inexcusable are you, that violate the First and Greatest of all? It was a severe Censure that our blessed Saviour

pass'd on the unbelieving Jews, when he said, *I know you, that ye have not the Love of God in you*, John v. 42. And it should make you tremble to consider, that this black Character belongs to you.

And that I may fasten this just Reproof on your Consciences, I would,

First, *Expostulate the Matter with you*, that I may, if possible, convince you both of your Guilt and Danger, while you are under such a cursed Disaffection to the blessed God! And to that end I beseech you to consider these two Things.

1. *The Unreasonableness and Ingratitude of this wretched Temper.*

What is there in that infinitely Great and Glorious Being, that we should be possess'd with such an unaccountable Aversion to him? If exquisite Beauty can attract, if matchless Excellencies can allure and draw; if boundless Goodness and Benignity can win and gain upon our Hearts, what should hinder us from loving him? What an absurd, what an amazing Height of Folly and Perverseness is it not to love him, who is infinite Love itself, and delights in the most diffusive Communication thereof, to all the Works of his Hands? How irregular and distemper'd must that Eye be, that does not love the Light? And how deeply must that Soul be deprav'd and debas'd, that bears no Affection to the best of all Beings? I may say to you in God's behalf, as our blessed Saviour said to the Jews, *Many good Works have I done, for which of those do ye stone me?* John x. 32. So may I say, you are surrounded with innumerable Benefits, as the Effects of the undeserved Love of God; For which of these are your Minds so deeply prejudic'd against him, and disaffected to him? Do you daily tread on his Earth, and breathe in his Air; are you fed with his Corn, and cloath'd with his Wool; are you from Day to Day protect'd by his Power, and maintain'd by his Bounty, and enrich'd with the Fruits of his Goodness? And is there no Tribute of superlative Affection due to so gracious a Benefactor, for all the valuable Gifts that you receive from his unoblig'd Hand? Can no Demonstrations of his marvellous Kindness affect your Hearts? No Cords and Bands of his Love draw you to himself? O the amazing Stupidity and Ingratitude of Sinners, that cherish and harbour such an unnatural Enmity to the Author of their Beings, and the Fountain of all their Mercies! How well may the blessed God call on the Heavens to hear, and the Earth to give ear to his just Complaint against such unthankful Creatures, and upbraid them with the Carriage of the Ox and the Ass, who (though the most stupid Animals, yet) discover far more of Ingenuity and Gratitude to their Masters for their Kindness and Care, than Man does to God. See Isa. i. 2, 3. But,

2. Consider farther, the pernicious Tendency of this your wretched Temper towards God.

The infinitely wise God has so fram'd the Soul of Man, that it can never be truly happy but in himself. All our very temporal Blessings entirely depend on his continued Favour and Bounty; and our Souls have those vast and enlarged Capacities, that God alone can satisfy. Our endless Blessedness in a future State, must spring from the immediate Vision and Enjoyment of himself. Now 'tis impossible for us to be Happy in the blessed God, without a sincere and superlative Love to him. A Soul that retains a predominant Disaffection to God, can never be the Object of his Complacency and Delight. Nay, such a disaffected Soul can never relish any Pleasure in the Presence and Communion of that God, whom it does not love. It does already affect an Estrangement and Distance from God, and can expect no other Doom, than an endless Separation from him. Nay, where the blessed God is not superlatively lov'd, he is in effect hated. And as that Hatred is daily heightened and sublimated by every Act of Hostility and Disobedience we commit, by all the new Guilt we contract, and the additional Degrees of Vengeance that we expose our selves to; so it renders us more like to Devils in Malignity, and prepares us to become Sharers with

with them in their *Misery* and *Torment*, as we are in their *Guilt* and *Wickedness*. To be an *Hater* of God, is a black *Brand* and *Character* of those that are *Children of Wrath*, and *Heirs of Hell*; so that in not loving God, we do not truly love our selves. By continuing *Enemies* to him, we are the worst *Enemies* to our own Souls. In fleeing from him, we in effect flee from our own *Happiness*. And as our base *Disaffection* to him is the most heinous *Guilt*; so it is the true *Spring* of our endless *Misery*.

Supposing you then to be sensible of the *Unreasonableness* and *Ingratitude*, and the *pernicious Tendency* of this wretched Temper, I should in the

Second Place, offer a few *Directions*, in order to the Cure of this your *unnatural Disaffection* to the blessed God.

But that with the remaining Part of the *Application*, I shall leave to the next *Discourse*.

S E R M O N XXV.

On the LOVE of GOD.

MATT. xxii. 35, 36, 37, 38.

- 35 Then one of them which was a Lawyer, asked him a Question, tempting him, and saying,
 36 Master, which is the great Commandment in the Law?
 37 Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Mind.
 38 This is the first and great Commandment.

Have already from these Words made some Progress in the Prosecution of this Subject, viz.

That to love the Lord our God, with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, is the first and great Command.

In treating whereon, I have already,

I. Consider'd the Command it self. And,

II. I shew'd, On what Accounts 'tis call'd the first and great Command.

I then came to the Application of this Subject: And, I. Hence we may infer the admirable Condescension of God, in proposing himself as the Object of our Love.

II. If loving God, &c. be the first and great Command, then Hatred of him is the most heinous and horrid Sin.

III. Hence I urg'd you to enquire, whether you comply with this first and great Commandment?

And here several Characters were propos'd, by which we may judge of the Sincerity of our Love to God.

IV. Hence I propos'd to address my self both to those that are destitute of the Love of God, and to those in whose Hearts it is implanted.

First, I would hence address my self to those that are devoid of the sincere Love of God.

And,

I. I propos'd to expostulate with such about their wretched Temper. To that purpose I urg'd them to consider,

1. The Unreasonableness and the perverse Ingratitude of it.

2. The pernicious Tendency of it. Nothing can be more inconsistent with our Happiness, than a cursed Disaffection to him: So that not to love him, is in Effect to hate our selves, and flee from our own Felicity, by fleeing from him the only Fountain of it.

Accordingly either the Bent of our Hearts towards God must be chang'd, or you must renounce all Expectations of eternal Blessedness in him. And will you choose rather to be extremely miserable in an endless Separation from God, than by loving him to become happy in his Presence and Love for ever?

I shall therefore, supposing you to be sensible of

the Unreasonableness and pernicious Tendency of this wretched Temper,

II. Offer a few Directions in order to the Cure of it.

If then you are convinc'd, that to love the Lord your God with all your Heart and Soul, &c. is your unquestionable Duty, and your apparent Interest; If you are ashamed of, and truly lament the wretched Disinclination of your Hearts towards him; If you really desire that that unreasonable Disaffection may be conquer'd, and the prevalent Love of God kindled in your Souls, then in order thereto, be willing to take some Pains with your own Hearts, in Compliance with the following Advices.

1. See that the main Ground of the Enmity and Disaffection be remov'd by a mutual Reconciliation.

For if we enquire into the secret Spring of that Enmity and Disaffection, we shall find it arises from hence: Sinners are obstinately in love with their Lusts, and cannot bear the strict Restraint of the Laws of God: And being on the other hand apprehensive, that a holy and righteous God will call them to an Account for, and severely avenge the Violation of his holy Laws; hence they entertain such a secret Disaffection to him, as a Malefactor has to a strict Magistrate or just Judge. They cannot be reconcil'd to the Purity and Righteousness of his Nature and Government, and their Apprehensions thereof prompt them to flee from him as their Enemy and Avenger. And this is the Account the Scripture gives of their Aversion from God. Their carnal Mind is Enmity against God, because it is not subject to his Law, Rom. viii. 7.

They are alienated and Enemies to him in their Minds by wicked Works, Col. i. 21. So that while they obstinately adhere to their Sins, their Hearts must needs be disinclin'd to, and prejudic'd against that blessed Majesty, who (they know) abhors their Iniquities, and has threaten'd most severely to punish them. Hence they are so studious to banish the very Thoughts of him, as uneasy and terrible to their Minds: And when any awful Judgment does irresistibly force those Thoughts upon them, their affrighted Consciences are ready to say as Ahab to the Prophet; Hast thou found me,

me, O mine Enemy! 1 Kings xxi. 20. Hence it is that they come to apprehend it their Interest there should be no God, or at least no such Holy and Sin-avenging God, as the Scriptures represent him to be; and are therefore strongly tempted to wish there were none; and gladly would they (if possible) rase the Sense of his Being out of their Minds.

Now if ever we would have the Love of God reimplanted in our Souls, this main Ground of Enmity must be remov'd. And that must be by a mutual Reconciliation: In order whereto, there must be serious Repentance on our part, and merciful Pardon on God's part.

If ever therefore we would have the Love of God restor'd in our Souls, we must renounce those Sins that are the Cause of the Enmity; and we must earnestly implore the Forgiveness and Favour of a reconciled God.

We must renounce those Sins that are the chief Cause of the Enmity.

For 'tis by our Sins that we chiefly vent our Enmity against God; and 'tis those provoke him to become our Enemy, and tempt us to regard him as such. 'Tis not therefore possible to restore any mutual Friendship and Love, unless either the blessed God change his holy and righteous Nature and Government; or there be a Change in our Temper and Frame. The former is absolutely impossible, as well as most unreasonable; the latter is most reasonable, and by divine Grace very possible, nay, easy to be effected. O then let us importunately beg the renewing Grace of God, to conquer the Enmity of our Hearts against his holy Laws, that so the Ground of our Disaffection to his holy Nature may cease. And let us second our Prayers with serious Endeavours. Let us deeply consider the Unreasonableness and Folly, the Odiousness and Deformity, the Evil and poysonous Malignity of those Sins that we have so long cherish'd, till we find the bent of our Hearts turn'd against them, and our Souls form'd to a just Abhorrence of them. Let us contemplate the Reasonableness and Equity, the Purity and Justice, nay, the Wisdom and Goodness of the Laws of God, that restrain us from nothing but what is vile and pernicious; that only enjoin whatever tends to ennoble and perfect our own Nature, and are admirably calculated to promote both the Welfare and Peace of publick Societies, and the present and future Happiness of particular Persons. Let us prosecute such Meditations on the Excellency of the Law of God, till we are deeply convinc'd that our Obedience to it is as truly our highest Interest, as 'tis our indispensable Duty, and till accordingly we find our Hearts reconcil'd to the Purity and Strictness of its Commands, and our Enmity against it turn'd into a predominant Love of it.

And to remove that further Ground of Enmity that our guilty Fears suggest,

We must implore the divine Forgiveness and Favour.

We must not conceive of God as an implacable Enemy or inexorable Judge; but as a most gracious Sovereign, nay, as a most compassionate Father. We must consider him as the Gospel represents him, as a God in Christ, reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases to them. We must behold him as a most indulgent Parent, whose Bowels yearn over even his Prodigal Son, and whose Arms of Mercy are extended to embrace him, upon his penitent Return; who is ready instead of upbraiding him with his past Folly, to give him the most welcome Entertainment, and to receive him even with a Transport of Joy and Satisfaction. And, O how irresistibly should such a Representation of an infinite merciful God, attract and melt the Heart of a convinced Sinner, that is conscious of all his perverse Carriage towards him! Sure, Sinner, when thou dost seriously consider, that that sovereign Majesty whose Anger thou hast provok'd by innumerable Offences, who has so many Advantages given him to glorify his Justice in thy deserved Ruin, has been so far from executing his threatned Vengeance upon thee, that he has from Day to Day, from Year to Year, waited to be

gracious to thee; and has by the Riches of his Goodness and Long-suffering led thee to Repentance; when thou considerest that he has sent his own Son to procure thy Pardon, at the Expence of his own Blood; and that he freely offers it, upon thy ingenuous Return to him; nay, by a marvellous Condescension beseeches thee, from time to time to accept it, (as if it were his Interest more than thine.) Sure such an amazing Discovery of his unparallel'd Clemency and Grace, of his infinitely tender Pity and Compassion, to a most undeserving and unthankful Wretch, must needs make thee blush, at thy own unreasonable Aversion from him; and powerfully kindle some Warmth of grateful Affection towards him in thy Heart. Sure such matchless Love will win and allure thy disaffected Soul, and thou wilt no longer be able to withstand the admirable attractive Force of it: Where is thy Ingenuity, if the yearning Bowels of a provok'd, but now reconcilable Father, will not awaken the Tenderness of filial Affection in thy Heart! If his matchless Love will not dissolve it into the kindly Exercises of ingenuous reciprocal Love! O then earnestly sue for Reconciliation and Peace with him; Say to him in the Language of the relenting Prodigal, Father, I have sinned against Heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be call'd thy Son, make me as one of thy hired Servants, Luke xv. 18, 19. Deprecate his deserved Severity and Vengeance; implore his restor'd Amity and Favour; and in an humble Reliance on his gracious Promise, cast thy self on his infinite Mercy, thro' the Blood of a Redeemer, for Pardon and Acceptance.

And when thou canst thus by Faith look up to him as a reconciled God, thy Affections will easily ascend to him. His infinite Love will be a most effectual Incentive to thine. The Thoughts of a propitious God will be no longer unwelcome and terrifying, but on the contrary sweet and delightful. Then thou wilt with Freedom and Pleasure draw nigh to him as a reconciled Father, from whom before thou wast inclin'd to flee as from an avenging Enemy. The Sense and Persuasion, nay, the believing Hopes of pardoning Mercy, will overcome all thy unreasonable Aversion, and make such deep Impressions of Gratitude on thy Heart, that thou wilt with that ingenuous Penitent, Love much, because much is forgiven thee, Luke vii. 47.

2. Earnestly implore the Spirit of Adoption, to form in thy Heart this filial Affection to thy heavenly Father.

Divine Love is one of his excellent Fruits, Gal. v. 22. 'Tis the brightest Lineament in that Image of God, which his regenerating Vertue reinstamps upon our Souls. 'Tis the most considerable Ingredient in that Divine or God-like Nature, that he makes us in our New-birth Partakers of. We must therefore beg that Spirit of Adoption, that will enable us to cry, Abba Father. We must pray that he whose Operations are resembled unto Fire, (Matt. iii. 11.) would enkindle in our Hearts this divine and heavenly Spark. 'Tis his Grace that alone can overcome the perverse Disinclination of our Hearts, and give them a new Bent and Byass towards God, as the only Centre of our satisfying Delight and Rest.

3. Let us cast out whatever is inconsistent with the predominant Love of God.

I have already suggested, That the Love of all impure Lusts must be mortified: For that is the chief Ground of our Enmity against God. The Love of this World, and the Things in it, (i. e. of the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, and of the Pride of Life) must be abandon'd. For if we love these, the Love of the Father is not in us, 1 John ii. 15. The Friendship of this World, (i. e. that Friendship that is founded on our Compliance with their corrupt Principles and Practices) is Enmity against God, James iv. 4.

We must also abandon all inordinate Love of this present World.

For the great God will admit of no Competitor for our Hearts, and much less of so vile and sordid a Rival as Mammon is, Matth. vi. 24. For the predominant

minant Love of God, must so entirely possess the Sovereignty and Throne in our Hearts, as to bring all lower Affections under its Control, and subject all lower Interests to the superior Interest of his Glory. If therefore we would have the Love of God reign in our Hearts, this *World* must be *dethron'd*, and our *immoderate Affection* to it *crucify'd*. None of its alluring *Pleasures* and *Delights*; none of its glittering *Honours* and *Pomp*; none of its tempting *Advantages* and *Interests*, must be regarded as any way comparable with the *Favour* of God. So that we must be ready in the Inclination and Purpose of our Hearts, to *renounce* all of them, rather than forego our Interest in him, and our Expectations from him. We must be in a great Measure *dead* to the Relish of all *sensual Joys*, if we would fix our Hearts on God, as the Centre of our *Happiness* and *Rest*: All other Affections must be entirely subordinate to this Divine and Heavenly one.

Nay, *All inordinate Self-love must be mortify'd*.

All that *irregular carnal Self-love* must be *renounc'd*, that makes us prefer our own *fleshy Ease* or *Pleasure*, or *Interest*, before the *Interest* and *Glory* of God. We must not only *hate Father and Mother*, &c. but even our *own Life* it self (Luke xiv. 26.) whenever *divine Love* prompts us to *forego* it for his sake. Nay, even all that *Self-love* must be *renounc'd*, that would make us set up our *own Happiness* above the *Glory* of God, and hinder our referring even that to his *Glory*, as our *ultimate End*.

What other *Directions* might be added to these, will as fitly occur among those I shall propose, to *such as do sincerely love God*. And therefore,

Secondly, I would hence *address* my self to those, in whose Hearts the Love of God is implanted.

Is this the first and great Command, to love the Lord our God? and must he be lov'd with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind? Then I would hence suggest something by way of just *Reproof*, and something by way of *Exhortation* and *Advice*.

I. I would hence *reprove* those woful *Defects* and *Decays* of *divine Love*, which the most of us are justly chargeable with.

Alas, how far short do we fall of the Perfection of *divine Love*, which this Command requires! Nay, how weak and comparatively languid are the *Degrees* of it! This heavenly Affection in us, is rather like an obscure and feeble *Spark*, than a bright and active *Flame*. How little are our Minds taken up in daily adoring, admiring Thoughts of God? How little are they ravish'd in the Contemplation of his most amiable and attractive Excellencies! How seldom do we thankfully recount his numberless and admirable Benefits, and how little are our Hearts inflam'd with affectionate Gratitude, to the Donor of them! As if the *Mercies* of God, like the *Stars*, were lost in their own Croud, and the fewer *Returns* of thankful Love were due to him, because the *Streams* of his Goodness flow to us in such an *uninterrupted Current*! How little do we delight in near Approaches to, and intimate Converses with the blessed God! How little do we long and thirst, and pant after him, with impatient Desires to know, and resemble, and enjoy him more! How little do we find of that ravishing Delight, which the inward Persuasion and Sense of an Interest in him, has been wont to raise holy Souls unto! How little do our Hearts aspire towards Heaven, as the *Region* and *Element* of perfected Love! Nay, how little does the Vigour of our Love to God, express and discover it self in our enlarged Zeal, for his Interest and Glory! How little do we long for, or sensibly rejoice in the Advancement of his Kingdom in the World! May we not blush to think that his matchless Excellencies and Glories should no more recommend him to our highest Esteem and Veneration! That his great and numberless Benefits should no more endear him to our Minds! That our backward and disinclined Hearts should tend, with no freer and swifter Motions towards him, our Supreme and only satisfying Good!

That our debased Affections should relish no more of ravishing Delight in him! That the woful Remains of carnal Affections should render it almost doubtful, whether God or the *World* have the Sovereignty in our Hearts! Methinks when we consider how infinitely he deserves our best Affections, and what he has done to attract and engage them; there is nothing should either more *humble* and *abase*, or *grieve* and *afflict* us, than that we love him no more.

And if you are indeed sensible of, and truly lament over the culpable Defects of your Love to God; I would then,

II. Hence *exhort* and urge all of you to love the Lord your God, and that according to the *Extent* of this great Command, with all your Heart, and Soul, and Mind.

I have already suggested, that in order hereto, we must endeavour that the *Grounds* of *Enmity* be *remov'd*, by a happy *mutual Reconciliation*; we must beg the Spirit of Adoption; we must cast out whatever is inconsistent with the Love of God. Now in order to our growing both in the *Habit*, and in the lively Exercise of *divine Love*, I shall add a few further *Directions*, and enforce them with a few *Motives*.

For *Direction*.

1. Let us habituate our Souls more to frequent Contemplations of the amiable Excellencies of God, especially of his attractive Goodness.

For what means can be more proper to inflame *divine Love*, than to fix our Eyes on the infinite Loveliness and Glory of that blessed Being?

And here we may distinctly contemplate them, as they shine out to us in the Works of Nature, Grace and Glory.

In the Works of Nature. For with how attractive Lustre do the amiable Glories of the divine Nature appear to us, in the Glass of this visible World! How marvellous is that Almighty Power, that spoke this vast Universe into Being, and still upholds and regulates the Motions of all his Creatures in it! How adorable is that Wisdom, that has establish'd such an Order and Connection, such a mutual Subserviency and Dependence, and consequently such a beauteous Symmetry and Harmony, amongst so vast a Variety of Beings! But especially how admirable is that boundless Benignity and Love, that extends and diffuses it self through the whole Creation! How do the liberal Supplies of divine Providence, suited to the Necessities of every living Thing, proclaim that God is good to all, and that his tender Mercies are over all his Works, Psal. cxlv. How is the whole Earth fill'd with his Goodness, and even with the particular Marks of his Goodness to us! Every Object we are surrounded with declares it; every Sense is a Witness of it; our Eyes behold it in the Brightness of the Heavens, and in the Verdure and Fruitfulness of the Earth; our Palates taste it in all those liberal Provisions for our Necessity and Delight, that the Air, the Earth, and Sea furnish us with; our Nostrils smell it, in the fragrant Odour of Herbs and Flowers; our Ears hear it in delicious and harmonious Sounds; we feel it in the warm Beams of the Sun, and in the refreshing Breezes of the Air; we abundantly enjoy it in all Conveniences and Comforts of Life, which the divine Liberality so richly imparts to us. And shall not so bright Discoveries of his incomparable Excellencies, especially of his infinite Goodness, possess our Minds with adoring Thoughts of him, and powerfully draw our Affections to him! Should we not love him, whose beneficent Love is as an overflowing Fountain, from whence all his Creatures and we our selves daily derive such refreshing Streams?

Let us further contemplate the amiable Glory of God, in the Works of Redemption and Grace.

And here indeed, that blessed Being does yet more illustriously appear to us, to be infinite Love it self, and consequently most deserving of our superlative Love, 1 John iv. 8.

O let us often contemplate the Love of God, in that brightest Image and Mirror of it, his incarnate Son, if

we would have our Hearts transformed into divine Love! Let us behold the *eternal Word*, cloth'd with our despicable Nature, subject to all our Infirmities and Miseries, going about doing good, and spending a laborious Life in continued Acts of Compassion to the Bodies and Souls of Men! Especially, let us behold the *Son of God* presenting himself as the *Substitute* and *Sacrifice* of guilty and worthless Sinners! Let us contemplate him in his dying Agonies on the Cross, as there made a Spectacle of the extreamest Disgrace and Misery, Shame and Pain; as there bearing our Sins in his own Body, and redeeming our wretched Life, at the Expence of his own. And can we view so moving an Object, without feeling some Ardours of Love kindled in our Breasts, towards our God and Saviour, towards that blessed Saviour who thus lov'd us, and wash'd us from our Sins in his own Blood; towards our heavenly Father, who spared not his own dear Son, but thus freely gave him up for us; who so lov'd us, when we lov'd not him, as to send his own Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins? Rom. viii. 32. 1 John iii. 10. Can we consider such a Breadth and Length, such a Height and Depth of divine Love, and our Hearts not be warm'd with the believing Meditations of it? Nay, let us read the Love of God in the Language of his gracious Covenant, that contains such marvellous Proposals of infinite Mercy, such great and precious Promises, made to those, whom their Guilt had thrown upon the very Brink of eternal Ruin. O let us contemplate the matchless Clemency and Pity of God, glorifying it self upon all our Sin and Guilt, superabounding towards those, whose Iniquities had so greatly abounded; Let us behold his efficacious Grace, quickning dead Souls to spiritual Life, transforming perverse Enemies and Rebels into reconciled and adopted Sons, moulding Vessels of Mercy and Honour, out of the corrupt Mass of Mankind; Let us contemplate his astonishing Mercy, rescuing the miserable Slaves of Satan, to make them Associates with Angels, and of Heirs of Hell making Heirs of eternal Glory; And shall not such amazing Discoveries of unparallel'd Love be powerful Incentives to divine Love! Shall so transcendent Benefits conferr'd on so undeserving Wretches, by such Wonders of Mercy and Grace, make no futable Impression on our Hearts? Can any Returns of Affection on our part be too great; nay, can any bear a tolerable Proportion to such vast Obligations of divine Love.

But to add no more, let us also contemplate the amiable Excellencies of God, as shining forth in the Works of Glory.

And there indeed are the brightest Discoveries, and richest Communications of the Love of God, as the most powerful Attractive to ours. 'Tis true, we have now no immediate sight of them. We can only by Faith take a distant View, as Moses might on Mount Nebo, have a remote Prospect of the promised Land. O let us then often by Faith foresee what we shall e'er long behold and enjoy.

Let us contemplate the amiable Glory of God, as it shines out to all the Blessed, in the Regions of perfect Light. Let us contemplate them as now possessing the fulness of Joy in his immediate Presence, and partaking of those ravishing Pleasures, that are at his right Hand for evermore, Ps. xvi. ult. Let us by Faith behold the Dignity and Honour, the Perfection and Excellency, the Felicity and Bliss, to which they are now advanced; and let us consider, that what they now enjoy, we have the sure Promise of; those unconceivable Glories which they possess are also reserved for us. For us that unchangeable Kingdom, and that immortal Crown is prepared; for us that incorruptible Inheritance is laid up; and shall not our Faith excite something of those Ardours of divine Love, which actual Possession will raise us to! Shall we not even here feel something of that heavenly Affection, that flames in the Breasts of glorified Saints, when we are the joyful Expectants of that Felicity which they inherit! Sure if our Thoughts were more conversant with Heaven, more of this pure Ce-

lestial Fire would descend into and warm our Hearts.

And indeed this Direction is so absolutely necessary, that 'tis in vain ever to expect, that our Exercises of divine Love should arise to any considerable Height and Ferour, without frequent Meditation on the attractive Glory of God. How should that amiable Object affect and ravish our Hearts, if we shut our Eyes upon it! How should we feel the warm Beams of the Sun, if we do not turn our selves towards it! 'Tis serious and frequent Meditations of God must supply the Fuel, for kindling and keeping alive this heavenly Flame in our Hearts.

2. Let us endeavour to clear up the Evidence of our Interest in the Love of God; and that will greatly facilitate the Exercise of our Love to him.

We love him because he first loved us, 1 John iv. 19. And therefore the stronger Persuasion and Sense we have of his peculiar Love, it will be the more powerful Incentive to the Love of him. 'Tis when the Love of God is by his Spirit shed abroad in our Hearts, (in the delightful Gust and Relish of it) that our devout Affections are the most enlarg'd towards him. O let us then beware of whatever might alienate the Heart of God from us, and intercept those Beams of his Love, which must continually maintain this divine Warmth in our Hearts? Let us especially avoid all presumptuous Sins, which by extinguishing the Sense of his Favour, cast a Damp upon our holy Affections: *Ye that love the Lord hate Evil.* Let us herein exercise our selves to keep a Conscience void of all Offence towards God, that we may daily walk in the reviving Sense of his gracious Acceptance: And then how sweet and refreshing will the Thoughts of God be! What Gladness and Joy will the Light of his Countenance diffuse into our Hearts? How delightful will it be to draw nigh to him! With what satisfying Complacency and Joy shall we reflect upon our Propriety and Interest in him! How would that lively Sense of his most undeserved and unparallel'd Love, continually prompt us to some futable Returns of devout Affection and Gratitude towards him! How would the view of our great Obligations to him, inflame us with ingenuous Zeal for his Interest and Glory.

3. Let us often review what we have experienc'd of this distinguishing Love of God to our selves.

'Tis his Power that has given us our Being and Life; 'tis the Wings of his Providence have been our continual Protection and Defence; 'tis his liberal Hand has supplied all our Necessities; 'tis his tender Pity has supported us under all our Afflictions, and reliev'd us in all our Distresses and Straits; 'tis his infinite Love that has not only provided a Saviour for us, but caus'd the glad Tidings of that great Salvation to sound in our Ears. 'Tis his singular Favour that has cast our Lot in a Land and Age of Light, that has blest us with such early Advantages of pious Education, and such precious Seasons of divine Grace. 'Tis especially his discriminating Grace that has open'd our blind Eyes, and conquer'd our rebellious Hearts, and made us his willing People in the Day of his Power, Ps. cx. 3. 'Tis his sovereign Mercy that has receiv'd us into his Alliance and Covenant, adopted us into his Family, and made us the Heirs of his eternal Kingdom. 'Tis his powerful Grace that has so often assisted us in our Duty, help'd our Infirmities, supported us under our Tryals, made us victorious over our Temptations, and recover'd us from Declensions and Back-slidings. 'Tis his boundless Mercy that has blotted out our numberless Transgressions, and restor'd to our wounded Souls the Joy of his Salvation. 'Tis he has so often heard our Prayers, heal'd our Diseases, and crown'd us with his Loving-kindness. 'Tis he has engag'd to give Grace here, and Glory hereafter, and to withhold no good Thing from us. And shall not so abundant, so constant Experience of so marvellous Love, deeply affect our Hearts, and excite them to the most enlarged Exercises of grateful Love? Shall we not call upon our Souls to bless the Lord, and upon all that is within us to extol his Name? Ps. ciii. 1, 2. Shall we ever lose the thankful Impression of so numberless and so

so valuable Benefits? Pl. ciii. 1, 2. What less can he deserve than all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind, to be offer'd up as a Sacrifice to him, in the Flames of devout Affection, to whose undeserved Love we owe all that we have or hope for!

4. Improve all other Graces in Subserviency to divine Love.

Let thy Exercises of Repentance for Sin, prepare thee for those Exercises of grateful Love, which the Sense of pardoning Mercy will prompt thee to. Let thy filial Fear preserve thee from relapsing into those Sins, that would intercept the Rays of divine Love, and cast a Damp on thy ingenuous Affections towards thy heavenly Father. Especially, let all the Exercises of thy Faith and Hope on unseen heavenly Objects, furnish thee with the most powerful Incentives to divine Love. 'Tis the genuine Property of divine Faith, that it works by Love. All the realizing Views that our Faith gives us of an unseen eternal Glory, should enflame our Affections towards that blessed God, who in his infinite Love has prepar'd so great and glorious Things for all that sincerely love him. And the more vigorous Expectations we entertain, of being the happy Possessors of that heavenly Inheritance, the more ardently should we love our heavenly Father, by whose undeserved Mercy we are preordain'd unto it: So that all the Exercises of our Faith and Hope, should be subservient to the higher Exercises of divine Love: Love being the End, which Faith and Hope are the Means to promote.

To excite you to this excellent Duty, I shall only subjoin a few Motives. As,

1. Consider, That rational Self-love should prompt us to the Love of God.

For if we can be no otherwise happy for ever, but in his Favour and Love; and if we are utterly incapable hereof, without a superlative Love of him, we then most regularly and effectually love our selves, when we place our highest Affections on God. For indeed (as I suggested before) he therefore chiefly courts our Love, that he may have the fit Occasion of making us for ever blessed, in the liberal Communications of his own Goodness.

2. Consider, That thus to love God is the principal End of thy Being.

It was for this thou hadst a rational Mind capable to behold his amiable Excellencies, and a rational Will capable to embrace and choose him, as the most perfect and satisfying Good. For this purpose has God given thee thy Affections, that thou might'st consecrate them unto him, and offer them as hallowed Fire upon his Altar: Nay, for this End the Son of God came from the Bosom of the Father, with the most glorious Discoveries of his infinite Love, that he might draw up thy Heart in ardent Love to him. Nay, for this End was the Spirit of Adoption sent into thy Heart, that he might shed abroad the Love of God there, and bring thy Soul under the ingenuous Constraints thereof. And wilt thou not live up more to the great End for which thou wert made; nay, for which thou wert redeem'd and renew'd?

3. Consider, How little any thing else can deserve thy best Affections.

All the amiable Excellency and Goodness that is to be found in the best of Creatures, is but as a Drop deriv'd from the Ocean, or rather but a dark Shadow of the divine Perfections. All desirable Enjoyments here are but Streams that issue from him the inexhaustible Source of all Good. And shall we prefer these broken Cisterns before the Fountain of living Waters? Shall a finite and dependent, a mutable and perishing, be prefer'd in our

Affections before the infinite, unchangeable, and All-satisfying Good?

Nay, shall even the most despicable and debasing Vanities, be Rivals with him for thine Heart? And such are all Things that stand in competition with him. 'Tis the highest Disparagement to thy own Understanding and Judgment, to think any thing more worthy of thy highest Love, than that infinitely amiable Being. What should, what can attract a rational Affection, if a Conjunction of all other possible Excellencies with boundless Goodness will not do it? If such a faint Appearance of Loveliness and Beauty in any Creature here, carry such Charms with it, How irresistible ones shouldst thou find in the Father of Lights, in whom there is no Darkness or Blemish at all; If a few inconsiderable Benefits receiv'd from a Relation or Friend here, can do so much to endear them; How much more should the numberless and far greater Benefits thou hast deriv'd from God, give him a superlative Interest in thy grateful Affections?

4. Consider, the great and precious Promises that are made to this Duty.

I shall only mention those two comprehensive Ones; the one relating to this Life, That all Things shall work together for good to them that love God, Rom. viii. 28. The other relating to the Life to come, That the Things which Eye hath not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it enter'd into the Heart of Man to conceive, are prepared by God for them that truly love him, 1 Cor. xi. 9. See also James i. 12. So that the more we improve in the ingenuous Exercises of Love to God, the more we are prepared and fitted for the largest Communications of his special Love to us.

5. Let us consider, That our Love to God is not only an effectual Means unto, but a considerable Ingredient of our future Perfection and Blessedness.

And 'tis on this Account that the Apostle Paul, when he compares those three radical Graces, of Faith, Hope and Love, gives divine Love the Preference. The greatest of these (saith he) is Love, 1 Cor. xiii. 13. And no wonder when as he intimates to us, we have only occasion for the Exercise of Faith and Hope, in this State of Imperfection and Distance, while the Happiness we expect is future and unseen: But Faith will ever long be exchang'd for Vision, and Hope for Enjoyment. These will then vanish: But divine Love will abide for ever. For there we shall behold the most glorious Manifestation, and partake of the fullest Communications of the Love of God; and consequently our Hearts will be most elevated and enlarg'd in the Exercise of Love to him: And indeed Love to God, as it implies the Souls highest Complacency and Satisfaction in him, is its final felicitating Act.

We can have no higher Notion of the Happiness of the heavenly Inhabitants, than that they perfectly love God, and are perfectly belov'd by him; that they are entirely pleasing to him, and most fully pleased in him for ever. So that the more we feel of the warm and vigorous Exercises of delightful Love, the more we feel of Heaven already begun. He that dwells in Love, dwells in God, and God in him, 1 John iv. 16. He is as it were received into the Embraces, he is imparadis'd in the Bosom of infinite Love. We should therefore as earnestly aspire to the greatest Ardours of divine Love, as we would to the highest Degrees of the heavenly Blessedness. For in this heavenly Exercise, our Work and our Wages, our Duty and our Reward, are inseparably conjoyn'd for ever. To love God with all our Heart, &c. is to make him the Centre of our everlasting Delight and Rest.

S E R M O N XXVI.

On our LOVE to our NEIGHBOUR.

MATT. xxii. 39, 40.

39. *And the second is like to it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*
40. *On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.*—



Have already consider'd that *first* and *great Commandment*, mentioned in the Verses foregoing, even that of *loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind*. And as our blessed Saviour proposes, that for the comprehensive *Summary* of the *Duties* of the *first Table*; so in the Words I have now read, he sets before us, as comprehensive a *Compendium* of the *Duties* of the *second Table*.

And though the *Command* I have been already urging, ought to have the *Precedency*, as enjoining a *Duty* of far greater Importance and Excellency in it self, (even the sublimest *Act* of true Religion, and that immediately directed to, and terminated upon the highest and most glorious *Object*, the blessed God himself.) Yet if we consider the Strefs which our Saviour lays upon this *Command* in my Text, it does as truly deserve our most attentive Consideration, in order to our conscientious Practice, as the other; and our Observance of it is as truly necessary to our present *Acceptance* and final *Reward*. The *second* (saith our blessed Saviour) *is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*.

The *Subject* then of our present Consideration lies plain before us, *viz.*

That to love our Neighbour as our selves, is a Command like unto the first and greatest, of loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.

In prosecution of this important Subject; I shall,

First, Explain the *Command* it self; to love our Neighbour as ones self.

Secondly, I shall consider on what account our Lord saith, that this *Command* is like the *first* and *greatest*, *viz.* Of loving God. &c.

First, I shall endeavour to explain the *Command* it self, *viz.* *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self*.

And here we must distinctly consider,

I. The *Object* propos'd to our Love, our Neighbour.

II. The *Substance* of the *Duty* it self, our loving him; and what particular *Acts* that includes.

III. The *Extent* or *Measure* of the *Duty*, *Thou shalt love him as thy self*.

I. We must here consider the *Object* propos'd to our Love, *viz.* *Our Neighbour*.

And whom we must understand by our Neighbour, our blessed Lord has fully resolv'd, in his Answer to the Question propos'd by the Self-justifying Pharisee, Luke x. 29. 'Tis evident that the Jewish Doctors generally suppos'd this *Command*, (as delivered by Moses) to extend only to those that were of the same

Religion with them; to those that were their Neighbours, or near to them in the Bonds of that sacred Society, from which they accounted all others Aliens and Foreigners. For though the Law of Moses requir'd, that they should extend this Love to Strangers; yet they understood it only of such Strangers as were Proselytes, and such as embrac'd their Religion, and subjected themselves to the Mosaick Law. Now our Saviour, to convince them that the Law of loving our Neighbour extended much further, even to all that were near to us by the Bonds of Nature and human Society, proposes this Instance to them, (whether as a History or only a Parable, 'tis not material to enquire.)

There lay a Man upon the Road between Jerusalem and Jericho, stript and wounded by Thieves, who left him half Dead; so that without speedy Help and Succour, he must have inevitably perish'd. A Priest and a Levite came by, (Persons whose very Office should have inspir'd them with a more eminent degree of Charity.) But they contented themselves with a transient View of so miserable an Object, and left him in the same deplorable Condition they found him. No doubt they were ready to pretend in excuse for themselves, that they knew not who he was. If they had known him to be a Jew or a Proselyte, they would have extended their Pity and charitable Help to him. But for any thing they could tell, he might be an impure Gentile, or (what was as bad) an Apostate Samaritan, and then what had they to do with him? But a Samaritan journeyed that way, and meeting with this sad Spectacle of Misery, his Bowels of Compassion yearn towards him, he binds up his Wounds, he sets him on his own Beast, conveys him to an Inn, gives Order about, and furnishes the necessary Expence for his Cure. He never enquires, was he a Samaritan, or Jew, or Gentile, was he circumcis'd, or uncircumcis'd, one that worship'd at Jerusalem, or Mount Gerizim; he only consider'd in him the common Nature of Man, and his present Calamity and Distress, that call'd for Relief and Succour from one that was his Fellow-Creature, and that he judg'd a sufficient Inducement and Motive to do all this for him. And therefore our Saviour leaves the Pharisee himself to determine the Case, Who had acted towards the poor wounded Man the true part of a Neighbour, and express'd the Love to him that's due to a Neighbour? And we may observe, how admirably our Lord calculates the History or Parable (whichever it be) for the Conviction of the Pharisee; had it been a Samaritan that lay wounded, he would have been perhaps ready to excuse the Uncharitableness of the Priest and

and the *Levite*, as no way oblig'd to pity his Case. But it being a *Jew* that lay thus wounded, and a *Samaritan* that thus reliev'd him, he could not but applaud and commend the Compassion of the *Samaritan*, who without any Enquiry who the Man was, took him for his Neighbour, and shew'd him that Pity and Kindness which in the like forlorn Circumstances he would have desired and expected himself.

So that according to our Saviour's clear Determination, every Man is our Neighbour, whom we have an Opportunity and Capacity of doing good to. Nay, even our Enemies themselves are not excluded from this Character; and consequently to them also must our Love extend. As our Saviour positively asserts, *Mat. v. 43, 44, 45.* No Difference of Nation or Country; of Faith and Religion, nay, no Consideration of personal Enmity it self, must shut out any from being the Objects of this enlarged Charity which this Precept enjoins, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour*, every one that's near to thee, by that common Blood of which God has made all Nations, by that reasonable Nature which all Mankind are Partakers of, be he Protestant or Papist, Christian or Infidel, Turk or Jew; he is at least near to thee, as he is thy Fellow-Creature, and as a Member of God's universal Kingdom, to which all Men do belong. And that is a sufficient Reason why thou should'st love him, and that even as thy self. 'Tis true indeed, there are different Degrees of that Love we owe to Objects, according to the different Degrees of Amiability in them, and accordingly the Effects of our Love must be suitably different; but in general, Love is due to all Men, and there must be no Limitation here in the Object of it.

I come therefore,

II. To consider the Substance of the Duty here enjoyn'd, viz. To love our Neighbour, and the particular Acts included therein.

For the Duty in general, of loving our Neighbour, to apprehend it aright, we must distinguish between natural sensitive Love, and rational Love; and between the internal Acts of rational Love, and the external Effects of it.

There is a natural sensitive Love which every Man bears to himself, founded on the sensible Perception of Pleasure and Pain, of sensitive Good or Evil. And this kind of Love we cannot extend to our Neighbour; we can no more feel his Pain and Misery, than his Hunger or Thirst. And we can have no more sensible Perception of his Pleasure, than of his Pain. Every Man feels the one and the other for himself, and they are no more communicable to others, than his individual Nature it self. And consequently this sensitive Love is not here to be understood.

And what is here said of the natural sensitive Love we bear to our selves, is equally applicable to that Love that is founded on some particular Relations we bear to others. Thus Parents have that natural sensitive Affection to their own Children, which they cannot have to the Children of others, conformable to the tender Affection to their own Young, which is observable even in Brutes themselves. The like may be said of the Love peculiar to the conjugal Relation, which the Reason and Ground of plainly intimates that it ought to be confin'd to its particular Object.

The Love then to our Neighbour, which the Text enjoins, must be understood of purely rational, as distinguish'd from sensitive Love. That rational Love I mean, of which Goodness is the proper abstracted Object, and which ought therefore to bear a proportion to the Degrees of that Goodness, in the Person we love.

And of this rational Love we must consider the internal Acts, and the genuine external Effects.

For the internal Acts of it, we may easily infer what they are, by considering what is included in the general Notion of Love.

To love our Neighbour then, is to esteem whatever we behold of amiable Goodness in him; to value and be pleas'd with whatever we see of the divine Likeness in him. To be duly affected with whatever we discern of attractive Excellency in him.

To love him, is to desire his real Welfare and Happiness, and to rejoice in whatever Degree and Measure of it we see him possess'd of; 'tis heartily to wish and pray for his Prosperity and Well-being, and to resent it with unfeigned Satisfaction and Delight.

To love him, is to have a sincere and ready Inclination of Soul, so far as we have a just Call and Opportunity to do him all the Good we can, by promoting his present or his eternal Welfare. Our Love must include a Promptitude of Mind (according to our Obligations and Abilities) to lay out our selves in any Acts of Beneficence and Kindness that may be serviceable to his real, and especially to his highest eternal Interest.

And our Love to our Neighbour must be consider'd as opposite to any such perverse Dis-inclination or evil Affection towards him, as would prompt us to do him wittingly or wilfully the least Harm or Prejudice, or to oppose and obstruct his real temporal or eternal Welfare and Good.

These Heads I shall content my self with, briefly suggesting here, because I shall have proper Occasion to enlarge upon them, when I come to enforce the Practice of this excellent Duty.

I proceed therefore to the

III^d General Head, viz. To consider the Extent and Measure of this Duty, *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.*

And here we may, for the clearing this Subject, distinctly consider, what is not and what is imply'd in this emphatical Expression, and why Self-love is thus made the Measure of our Duty to others?

Negatively, To love our Neighbour as our selves does not imply,

1. That we should love him with the same sensitive Love we bear to our selves.

For that I have shew'd to be impossible, while we have not the same sensitive Perception of his Pleasure or Pain, as of our own.

2. Nor does it imply, That our rational Love should extend to all in an equal Degree.

For even our Love to our selves must vary according to the various Degrees of our own Amiability and Goodness. The same Person may justly take a higher Complacency and Delight in himself, when renew'd and sanctify'd by divine Grace, than he ought to take in himself, while as yet unregenerate and wicked; because the God-like Qualities that he is now endu'd with, have render'd him more truly lovely: And so our Love to Men must vary in Degree, according to the different Attractives thereof, that appear in them. We are not oblig'd to take that Complacency in a Son of Belial, that we should in a Child of God.

The Saints on Earth must be, in a peculiar Manner, our Delight. We must, indeed, love with a benevolent Affection all Men, in whom God's natural Image appears; but we must love those much more with a more endeared delightful Affection, on whom the moral Image of God is stamp'd. Nay, even our Love to good Men must, in Degree, vary according to the different Measures of that glorious Likeness of his that shines in them.

3. Nor does the Expression imply, that we must extend all external Effects of our Love equally to all, nor to all in an equal Degree as to our selves.

Thus, tho' we must do good to all, yet there must be a peculiar Preference in our Acts of Beneficence given to those that are of the Household of Faith, Gal. vi. 7. Nay, since our Power of doing Good, is but limited and confin'd to a narrow Sphere, it must ordinarily be chiefly exercised towards those whose Welfare God has bound us more especially to take the Care of, (both their Souls and Bodies being our peculiar Charge). Thus we are not bound equally to provide for all indigent Persons, as for those of our own Family. Nor are we oblig'd to take equal Pains by holy Instructions and Counsels to promote the eternal Salvation of all we converse with, as of those under our particular Inspection. So that many Effects of our beneficent Love must be ordinarily directed by the particular Relations wherein

wherein we stand to others, tho' they must not be so limited to them, as to exclude all others, whom we have real Ability and Opportunity of doing good to, without any Injury to those under our stated Charge.

And, as this Precept does not require, That all Effects of our beneficent Love should equally extend to all; so neither does it require, that they should extend to all in an equal Degree as to our selves. For we are not oblig'd to take as much Pains for the Sustainance and Comfort of every Man's Life as for our own; nor to use equal Industry in promoting their Salvation, as in securing our own.

But positively our loving our Neighbour as our selves, implies, That we should make that rational Love we justly bear to our selves, so far the Standard and Measure of the Love we bear to our Neighbour, as to love him impartially, according to what we discern of amiable Goodness in him; as we justly love our selves according to our own.

I have already suggested, That the Object of rational Love, is Goodness: And consequently the proper Object of our Love to others must be some apprehended amiable Excellency in them. Now there is in all Men some amiable Likeness and Resemblance of God to recommend them to our Love. There is in the worst of Men that spiritual reasonable Nature that bears the bright Characters of him who is the Father of Spirits. There is in them also a Capacity of being recover'd to the moral Image of God, and consequently of being for ever happy in him. Even they are our Fellow-Creatures and Fellow-Subjects, as we are all of us Members of God's universal Kingdom here below. But there is in many the brighter moral Image of God, (consisting in Wisdom, Righteousness, and true Holiness) which is more amiable, and deserving of our higher Love.

Now this rational Love, that chiefly consists in the Estimation of the Understanding, and Complacency of the Will, must impartially bear a true Proportion to the Goodness that appears in others, as they are God's Creatures or his Children. We must no more fall short of any due Degree of Love to them, than of Love to our selves. We must love every natural Man as our natural selves, and every Saint as we do our selves, under that Character and Notion: Nay, the more God has imparted to any of natural Endowments, or common Gifts, or gracious and divine Qualities, the more amiable must they be to us. So that as far as we see others herein excel us, so far must we love them, even more than our selves. Even as we must love Christ as Man more than our selves, as being a more glorious Image and Mirrour of the invisible God: And as we must love God more than our selves, as being infinitely more excellent and amiable.

And accordingly our Love to others must appear in the genuine Exercise of it.

We must as truly rejoice in the Good of others, as in our own, especially in the publick extensive Welfare of civil or sacred Societies, of Kingdoms or Churches. The Welfare of such Societies must be more valued by us, and be more the Matter of our Delight than our own, as being truly more valuable and desirable. We must relish a higher Pleasure therein, as a more comprehensive Means of glorifying and pleasing God.

So we must desire the Welfare of others as our own, and offer up our Prayers with the same Devotion and Ardour for their Salvation as for our own. That universal Charity must inspire our pious Wishes that the Tenor of our Lord's Prayer suggests to us.

Nay, so far as we have a Call and Opportunity of doing good to others, we must embrace and prosecute it with the same cordial Zeal and Alacrity, as we would an Opportunity of doing good to our selves.

And truly we have great Reason to admire the Wisdom of God, in the Perspicuity and Clearness of this excellent Precept, that brings down every Man's Duty, as it were, to the Level of his own Capacity, and constitutes himself the Arbitrator and Judge, in reference to what he owes to his Neighbour. So that none who follow this Rule impartially, can easily fail of any Part

of his Duty to others. We all of us know what it is to love our selves; we are fully conscious to the inward Motions of our Affections in reference to what concerns our own Welfare and Interest; we know what we are inclineable and ready to do for our selves. And thence we may the more easily determine, what our Temper and Behaviour towards our Neighbour should be.

Do we not take notice of, and value any excellent Qualities we behold in our selves? Do we not view them with inward Approbation and Complacency? And should we not as highly esteem and approve what we behold of the like amiable Image of God in others? And that impartially, according to the Degree of it?

Do we not rejoice in the Prosperity of our own external Condition? Do we not much more relish our Progress and Advancement in Knowledge and Grace, our Serviceableness to the Interest of God here, and our Expectations of an eternal Reward, with the highest Pleasure? With the like Satisfaction of Soul should we view the flourishing State of others. The like Delight should the Contemplation of their Eminency in Piety, their Usefulness in the World, and their heavenly Hopes, yield to our charitable Minds.

Do we not wish very well to our selves? Do we not desire Direction and Success in our lawful Undertakings and Affairs? Do we not especially most earnestly breathe after spiritual and heavenly Blessings? So cordially should we long for the Good of others; so affectionately should we pray for their temporal, but especially for their eternal Welfare.

Are we not most ready and industrious to promote our own Good? Does not Self-love prompt us to earnest Endeavours after Succour and Relief, under any Exigencies and Distress? Do we not seek and expect Pity and Compassion, charitable Assistance and Support for our selves, under our own Afflictions or Straits? Hence we may judge, how our Love should work towards others, when we have Ability and a just Call to be serviceable and kind, compassionate and helpful unto them.

And indeed when we thus set our selves in the Case and State of our Neighbour, when we make Self-love the Measure of our Affection to him, there is no great Danger of our erring on the defective Hand. We are not wont to fail in any Degree of Love due to our selves; and if we make that our Standard, we shall as little fail in paying to our Neighbour the Tribute of Love that's really due to him. So that Self-love, when thus rightly improv'd, will, instead of obstructing, rather regulate and heighten our God-like Love to others.

What might be further suggested under this Head, will as fitly occur in the Application.

But before I enter on that, I must consider,

Secondly, Why our Lord saith of this Command, That 'tis like the First and Greatest, viz. Of loving the Lord, &c.

Ans. No doubt these Words in general bespeak the great Excellency of it. For, as I before suggested, the foregoing Command is the Summary of all true Piety, and the Substance and Soul of all inward vital Religion. So that our Saviour could not have given a higher Commendation to this Precept, than to pronounce it like unto that.

Not that our Lord here intends to intimate an absolute Equality in these two Commands, as if the former did not justly challenge any Preference in point of Dignity and Excellency, as well as Order. For, doubtless, our Duty towards God is of infinitely greater Importance and Moment, than our Duty towards our Fellow-Creatures. And as his attractive Amiableness infinitely transcends theirs, so do our Obligations to love him transcend any we can have to love our Neighbour. There is no Comparison then betwixt them, if we respect the intrinsic Excellency of the Duty commanded.

But yet our Lord does, upon very solid Grounds, resemble this second to that first and great Command: For 'tis truly like unto it, in regard of its Extent and Influence; in regard of the Stress that God is pleas'd to lay upon

upon it; and in regard of the Principle it springs from.

1. This Precept is like the first and great Command, in regard of its Extent and Influence.

Is the former Command of loving the Lord, &c. a comprehensive Summary of all the Duties of the first Table? So that where-ever this divine Principle reigns in the Heart, it will dispose and prompt us to all particular Acts of true Piety? In like manner is this Command of loving our Neighbour as our selves, the comprehensive Summary of all the Duties of the second Table. So that where-ever this God-like Affection is predominant in the Heart, it will regulate the whole of our Conduct and Behaviour towards our Neighbour, and prompt us to the Performance of every particular Duty we owe to him. All the Law (saith the Apostle Paul) is fulfilled in this one Word, even in this, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self, Gal. v. 14. i. e. All that Part of it which the second Table contains. For so he must be understood, as appears from that parallel Place, Rom. xiii. 8, 9. Owe no Man any Thing, but to love one another; for he that loveth another, hath fulfilled the Law. For this, Thou shalt not commit Adultery; thou shalt not Kill; thou shalt not Steal; thou shalt not bear false Witness; thou shalt not Covet: And if there be any other Commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this Saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. And indeed, the Reasonableness of what the Apostle suggests, concerning the vast Compass and extensive Influence of this Precept, is manifest and unquestionable. 'Tis obvious to every one, that if we lov'd our Neighbour as our selves, we should be as unwilling to offer Violence to his Life, as to our own; we should no more injure and hurt him, than we wou'd our selves; we should no more be angry with him without Cause, and without Measure, than with our selves; we should as readily forgive him as we do our selves; we should no more defraud and over-reach him, than we would our selves; we should as heartily promote his temporal Welfare as we do our own; we should no more defame and slander him, than we would our selves; we should be as tender of his Reputation, as of our own; we should be as unwilling to receive or credit any injurious or evil Reports concerning him, as we are that others should entertain or believe such Reports concerning our selves; we should no more repine at his Prosperity than at our own: Nay, we should, on the contrary, as truly rejoice in it, as in our own.

So large and powerful is the Influence of this divine Principle. So justly does our Lord liken this Command to the former, in respect to the vast Latitude and Extent of it. But,

2. This Command is like the First and Greatest, in regard of the Strefs that God himself lays upon it.

For 'tis no less necessary to our Acceptance and Reward, that we love our Neighbour as our selves, than that we love the Lord our God, &c. Hence all that are destitute of this Brotherly Love, are as peremptorily excluded from the Kingdom of God, as those that are destitute of divine Love it self. He that loves not his Brother, abideth in Death; he that hates him has no right to eternal Life, 1 John iii. 14, 15. Nay, the blessed God will not own that Love we pretend to him for genuine and sincere, which is not productive of unfeigned Love to others. If a Man say, I love God, and hates his Brother, he is a Liar; For he that loves not his Brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen, 1 John iv. 20. Nay, as no external Acts of Piety are acceptable to God, but what are animated by divine Love; so no external Duties towards Men are pleasing to him, if they spring not from this God-like Disposition. 'Tis this gives them a divine Tincture, and renders them genuine Resemblances and Imitations of the divine Benignity and Goodness. To forbear Revenge without Charity, is only Stupidity or Cowardise. But if it spring from that Principle, 'tis true Meekness and Patience. To give Alms without Charity, is but vain-glorious Ostentation. But that is acceptable Alms which not only our Hand but our Heart it self reaches out, from a tender and

compassionate Sense of the Necessities of others. To do a righteous Act meerly for Credit or Interest sake, is but an Act of Policy: But to do it from that Charity that considers our Brother's Case as our own, and prompts us to do to him as we would be done unto; this is indeed true Christian Justice. Nay, so great Strefs does God lay upon it, that he refuses our Acts of Devotion towards him, when unaccompany'd with charitable Affection to Men, and will not admit us to present our Offering on his Altar, till we are reconcil'd to our offended Brother. He is unwilling to be at Peace with us, till we are at Peace with them; and will receive no Oblation from us, but what is presented with a charitable Heart and Hand. See Matt. v. 23, 24.

3. This Commandment may be justly said to be like the First and Greatest, of loving God, &c. because 'tis indeed the genuine Issue and Product of it.

For 'tis on God's Account that we thus love our Neighbour as our selves. For 'tis the Image of God (either natural or moral, or both) that must endear him to us, and powerfully attract our Affection. So that indeed Brotherly Love is a genuine Branch that springs from the Root of divine Love, and does in a great Measure partake of the Nature of that excellent and heavenly Principle. He that loves him that begat, will love him that is begotten of him, 1 John v. 1. We do in effect love God himself, in loving our Brother, because we love our Brother on the Account of that Relation he bears to God, and that Resemblance of God that is stamp'd upon him.

It remains, that we apply this practical Subject.

And,

1. Hence we may infer, the infinite Goodness of God, that so admirably shines out in all his Laws, and particularly in this, whereby he has oblig'd us to love our Neighbour as our selves.

It does argue marvellous Goodness, that the blessed God should be so solicitous to cement the Society of Mankind by this universal Law of Love. A Law, which if generally and entirely observ'd, would soon become the Glory and Happiness of all sacred and civil Societies, and render this Earth a true Model of Heaven. A Law which if duly kept, would effectually prevent all those Contentions and Fars, Animosities and Discords, Strife and Wars, which are the fruitful Source of most of those Calamities and Miseries that make this Earth so wretched and gloomy a Scene, and so like to Hell it self. So truly are God's Commands the genuine Dictates of his matchless Goodness, and adapted to the real Interest of those to whom they are deliver'd. How evidently does he desire the Welfare of his Creatures, who lays so strict Obligations upon them to contribute their utmost to the Welfare of each other, even as cordially as they would to their own!

But yet it enhances the Goodness of God the more, that he should lay so great a Strefs on this Command, as to conjoyn it to that of loving himself. How justly might he have even engross'd all our Affection to himself, to whose infinitely amiable Excellencies, and adorable Goodness, all our Love is due! How wonderful is it then, not only that he allows us to give so great a Share in our Love to our Fellow-Creatures, but so strictly enjoyns it, and, in effect, declares that he is as truly pleas'd with it, and will as liberally reward it, as he is pleas'd with, and will reward our superlative Love to himself! O amazing Condescension, that when the Disparity in the Commands is so unconceivable and apparent; he should, as it were, equal and level them, by declaring, that this Second, of loving our Neighbour, is like unto the First, of loving himself. As if he accounted our Interest to be of equal Consideration with his own, or at least, were as intent to promote it, as to assert his own Right, and secure his own incommunicable Glory.

II. Hence we may further infer, the vast Importance of this Command, and how much it deserves our attentive Consideration, and conscientious Care, in order to the Practice of it.

'Tis so far from being one of the smaller Points, the minuter Injunctions, or least Commands of the Law, such as the Tything of Anise and Cumin, that 'tis to be reckon'd among what our Lord accounts the [κατακαύρα τῶ νόμου] weightier Things of the Law.

Nay, it must be in our Esteem plac'd in a very eminent Rank, as one of the most essential Branches of true Religion, when 'tis thus resembled to the first and great Command. 'Tis indeed *one half* of practical Religion, as Love to God is the other. Let no Man then despise or slight this Command, by pretending that the enforcing and urging the Practice of it, is but preaching Morality. If by Morality, they mean only the external Part of our Duty towards Men, such as the external Acts of Justice or Mercy; then I must tell you, that in pressing this Duty, we preach up far more than such Morality. For we require and inculcate the Exercise of that inward Principle of God-like Love, which gives such external Acts their true Value in the Sight of God, and we urge the Performance of these external Acts, from the genuine peculiar Motives and Encouragements which the Gospel suggests. But if by Morality they understand the whole of our Duty towards both God and Man, 'tis the main Business of a Gospel-Minister to preach up such Morality as this. And he that urges Men to the Practice of such Morality, I mean the Love of God and Man, enforcing it by the genuine Arguments the Gospel suggests, and withal, directs Men to the Grace of God for Strength to perform it aright, and to his Mercy thro' Christ for the Pardon of our Defects, does truly and faithfully preach the Gospel of Christ. And to call this, by way of Contempt

and Diminution, the *Preaching of Morality*, argues Men's Ignorance of the genuine Design of the Christian Religion, all the very *Speculative Doctrines* whereof are chiefly calculated to form in our Hearts a *superlative Love of God*, and an *unfeigned Love of Men*, so far as they resemble him, and stand related to him. And O that we could find more of this excellent Morality in the Christian World! O that we could see the Faith Men pretend to, more effectually to kindle these Flames of heavenly Love in their Hearts! We should then see the genuine Fruits of our Ministry, and the grand Design of Christianity attain'd. For the End of the Commandment, i. e. of the whole divine Revelation, even of the Gospel of Christ, as well as the Law of Moses, [αγαπην] is Charity, out of a pure Heart and good Conscience, and Faith unfeigned, 1 Tim. i. 5. i. e. Love to God and Men springing from a Heart purify'd from all contrary corrupt Affections, from a Conscience void of Offence, and from unfeigned Faith in those great Truths, especially those precious Promises that contain so powerful Incentives to our Duty. How diligently should we then study this comprehensive Branch of the divine Law, even this royal Law of Love! How deeply should we consider our strong Obligations to it! How earnestly should we pray and endeavour that it may be written in our Hearts, and become conspicuous and legible in the whole of our Conversation! And such Apprehensions of its Importance, should prepare us for the attentive Consideration of what may be further said to instruct and to direct us in this important Duty, and to excite us to the Practice of it. Of which more in the next Discourse on this Subject.

S E R M O N XXVII.

On our LOVE to our NEIGHBOUR.

M A T T. xxii. 39, 40.

39 And the second is like unto it; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.
40 On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets. —



HAVE already enter'd on the Subject which these Words offer to our Meditation, viz.

That to love our Neighbour as our selves, is a Command like unto the First and Greatest, of loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Mind.

In prosecution thereof, I propos'd,

First, To explain the Command it self.

And here I consider'd,

I. The Object propos'd to our Love, our Neighbour; i. e. Every one that's near and allied to us, either as a Christian, or as a Man, by the Bonds of Grace, or of Nature it self, our Enemies themselves not excluded.

II. I consider'd the Substance of the Duty, Thou shalt love him.

III. I consider'd the Extent and Measure of this Duty, Thou shalt love him as thy self.

Secondly, I consider'd, Why this Command is said to be like the first and great Command, Of loving the Lord our God, &c.

These Words import not an Equality in Point of Excellency. But yet this second is like to that first Command,

in respect of its Extent, (as the Summary of all Second-Table-Duties) in respect of the Stress God lays upon it, and because 'tis the genuine Issue and Product of divine Love.

I then came to the Application of this Subject:

And here,

I. Hence we may infer the infinite Goodness of God, that so admirably shines out in this Law, and in the eminent Character given here of it.

II. Hence we may infer the vast Importance of this Command, and how much it deserves our attentive Consideration and conscientious Care in the Practice of it.

III. If to love our Neighbour, &c. be a Command like the First and Greatest; then we may infer, How heinous a Sin that narrow Selfishness is, which is so opposite to the impartial Love we should bear to others.

And alas, little do the Generality of Men, nay, of profess'd Christians themselves, consider the comprehensive Malignity of this Sin, which is so universal, so visibly predominant in every wicked Man, and of which there are such woful Reliques, even in good Men themselves, that obscure the amiable Glory of divine Grace in them.

But

But that we may be more deeply apprehensive of this pernicious *Disease* of our depraved Nature, in order to the Cure of it; let us a little consider the usual *Instances* wherein this inordinate *Selfishness* appears, and the lamentable *Effects* that spring from it.

This *Sin* indeed is the fundamental *Corruption* of the *Will* of *Man*, which was made to love Good as Good, and consequently the highest Good with the highest Love. Whereas this *Sin* sets up the *Interest* of every individual *Man*, nay, usually his carnal, and often his mistaken *Interest*, above the more valuable *Interest* of others; nay, above the publick Good, and above the *Glory* of God it self. As if nothing were farther good, and consequently amiable, than as conducive to our narrow, nay, our sordid fleshy *Self-Interest*. And yet this vile and corrupt *Maxim* of degenerate Nature, have some confident *Pretenders* to *Philosophy*, cry'd up, as if it were the most undoubted *Dictate* of our unprejudic'd Reason. And 'tis easy to imagine, what kind of *Morality* those must teach us, that thus make the radical *Corruption* of our Nature, an innocent and harmless Thing. But sure we can never entertain such Thoughts of this inordinate *Selfishness*, if we do but consider the genuine *Instances* and *Fruits* of it.

'Tis this *Sin* that produces in us those over-magnifying Thoughts of our selves, and that inordinate *Desire* of being over-valued and applauded by others, that makes us envy the just Reputation of others, and strive to exalt our own upon the Ruin of it. 'Tis this *Sin* that prompts us to aspire above the Condition wherein Providence has set us, and above the Station and Work we are truly fitted for, and thereby engages us in *Emulation* and *Strife*, *Hatred* and *Enmity* against all that stand in the Way of our ambitious Projects and Designs. 'Tis this *Sin* that makes us look on the more prosperous Condition of others, with an envious and repining Mind, as if our Eye towards them were therefore evil, because the Eye of God has been good. 'Tis this that renders their Welfare and Happiness rather the Matter of our secret Discontent and Grief, than of our Joy and Satisfaction; and even makes us feel a hellish Pleasure in those Losses or Calamities that cast them down from the flourishing Condition in which we envy'd to see them plac'd. 'Tis this makes Men so immoderately intent upon their own narrow *Interest*, as to pursue it to the Prejudice of the more considerable Good of others, nay, often by the most sinful and injurious Means. 'Tis this makes them so regardless of the Welfare of others, so insensible of their Miseries, and so backward to relieve their pressing Wants. To what must we ascribe all that Tyranny and Oppression, Rigour and Severity in Princes and other civil Superiors, and all that Disobedience and Ungovernableness in Subjects and Inferiors; and all that Emulation and ambitious Strife among Equals, that are so often the Bane and Plague of human Societies, but to this inordinate *Self-love*? Nay, from this Source all those boisterous Passions that so often lead to an Issue in Revenge, and Cruelty, and Murder it self, apparently spring. All that Covetousness and Oppression of the Poor, all that Fraud and Rapine, all that Injustice and Extortion, all that Prodigality and Luxury, all that corrupting of Judgment by perjur'd Witnesses, or by partial Juries, and bribed Judges; nay, all the vexatious Law-Suits, and the Animosities that attend them: In a Word, all those unjust and uncharitable Actions that render this Earth so like to Hell, such a Scene of Confusion and Disorder, such a Theatre of Wars and Contentions, such a Vale of Tears and of Misery, are but the genuine Branches that sprout up from this radical Sin of inordinate *Self-love*. So that this *Sin* is the genuine, but most hateful Image of Satan. 'Tis the malignant Poyson that he has diffused into our Nature. 'Tis the pregnant Womb of all other Sins against the second Table; and (as some judicious Divines assert) 'tis the chief Spring of our secret Aversion from God himself, Man's Apostacy being his turning from God unto himself.

And O what reason have those of you in whom this Sin is visibly predominant, to look upon it as a black

Mark of an unregenerate State! He that loves not his Brother (saith the Apostle, 1 John iii 15) abides in Death.

And no wonder when he has the same Principle prevalent in him, from whence the grossest Acts of Murder, Revenge, Theft, Injustice, Perjuries, &c. flow; and which would hurry him to the Commission of them, if he were not more powerfully restrain'd by the Fear of human Laws than by his own Inclination. O what need have such then to get this Root of Bitterness extirpated, this fundamental Corruption subdued, this spreading Malignity and Plague healed! We should justly conclude our Case dangerous, if our Hearts were devoid of the Love of God. But 'tis no less dangerous while thro' the Prevalency of *Self-love*, we do not unfeignedly love our Neighbour as our selves.

Nay, what reason have we all to watch against the Remains of this Sin, which stick so close to all of us! For these Reliques of Passion and Pride, of uncharitable Censures and Animosities, of Emulation and Envy, and of inordinate Self-seeking, which too visibly discover themselves (I fear I may too truly say) in many otherwise eminently pious and good Men, plainly tell us, that this Sin, tho' subdu'd, is not quite extirpated; and that tho' they do sincerely comply with this Command, of loving their Neighbour as themselves, 'tis but yet in an imperfect Degree and Measure. But,

IV. This Subject should therefore put us on serious Reflections on our selves, whether we do in Compliance with this important Command, love our Neighbour as our selves.

And here we have great occasion to descend into our own Hearts, and observe the most secret Workings and Motions of them towards our Neighbour. 'Tis comparatively a far easier Matter so to regulate our Language and external Behaviour towards others, as that it shall not grossly contradict this excellent Precept. The Law of Civility and Kindness may be found in our Lips, and our Carriage may have a plausible Appearance of Amity towards our Neighbour, when our Heart is not rightly affected towards him, and we our selves should blush, if he were conscious to our inward Thoughts and Disposition; if he could see all our contemptuous Apprehensions of him; all our secret Envyings of his external Prosperity and Success, nay, of his Graces and Gifts, all our inordinate Desires of what he enjoys; nay, all our sinister Intentions of advancing our Interest to the Prejudice of his Right. But we should duly consider, that God is conscious to all the Secrets of our Hearts, and takes notice of these inward Deviations from his Holy Law. O let us then diligently enquire into these unobserved Actions of our own Hearts, whether we, instead of envying the Good of others, on the contrary truly desire it, and heartily rejoice in it, as in our own? Whether we are inclin'd and ready according to the Opportunities that offer, to promote their temporal or spiritual Welfare, with the like affectionate Concern and Industry as we would our own?

But because the Prosecution of this Use of Tryal, would lead me to insist on all the particular Instances of Love to our Neighbour, I shall rather refer it to your own Meditation, for which you will find proper Heads suggested in the next Use, viz.

V. Hence I would exhort all of you to the conscientious Practice of this Duty, Of loving your Neighbour as your selves.

And here I shall be oblig'd to lay before you the chief particular Duties that are included in this general and comprehensive One. And,

I. Let us impartially esteem and value what we behold of amiable Goodness in others, as we do what we discern in our selves.

For all Love supposes some Excellency we behold in the Object lov'd; and so far as we despise our Neighbour we do not love him. He that despiseth his Neighbour sinneth, (saith the wise Man) Prov. xiv. 21. And particularly by violating this grand Law of Love. For indeed, no Man should appear wholly contemptible to us. We may, in every one, see what ought to attract our Esteem and Affection. There's none but we may be-

hold in them the beautiful Image of God enstamp'd on their rational Nature. There is in every Man a Heaven-born Spirit, resembling the Father of Spirits, and the Inspiration of the Almighty hath given him Understanding, Job xxxii. 8. Every Man is the Workmanship and Off-spring of God, as well as our selves. He that made us in the Womb, made them, and it was one that fashioned both there. (As Job speaks of his Servants, whom on that Account he saith he durst not despise, Job xxxi. 13, 14, 15.) Every Man hath the same natural Faculties and Powers, and is thereby capable of being restor'd to the moral holy Image of God, and of being for ever happy in the Enjoyment of him. Every one that we converse with, is under the same Offers of Pardon and Salvation thro' the Blood of the great Redeemer, that are made unto our selves. So that that Question may well be put to us, *Why dost thou set at nought thy Brother?* Rom. xiv. 10. Does he want those Riches and Honours which thou possessest? Or is he destitute of those excellent Abilities and Endowments of Mind that thou art adorned with? To what canst thou ascribe this, but to the distinguishing Providence and Favour of God, which might have given him the same Advantage above thee? Nay, what tho' at present his Wickedness it self does render him so far most justly vile and hateful; yet as it does not deprive him of the natural Image of God, so his renewing Grace can recover him from these odious Deformities. It can make him a Vessel of Mercy and Honour, and put a noble heavenly Stamp upon him.

And as we should on such Accounts esteem every Man, looking on none as despicable and below our Consideration and Regard; so we should much more esteem those in whom brighter Rays of God's amiable Glory shine. Wherever we behold the glorious Effects of his sanctifying Grace in an eminent Degree, they must proportionably attract our affectionate Veneration. We must honour all Men, but especially those in whom there appears most of a God-like Temper and Disposition, and in whom we may discern the most illustrious Imitations of the divine Life. Our Love must impartially, in Honour, prefer those above our selves, whom the Providence or Grace of God has confer'd more of civil, or of spiritual Dignity and Excellency upon.

2. Let us be inwardly affected towards the Good and Welfare of our Neighbour, as we are towards our own.

Particularly.

Let us as sincerely desire and wish it as we do our own.

Love necessarily implies Good-will to the Person we love, and consequently makes us desire his real Felicity and Well-being.

So should our Love to others vent it self in our cordial Wishes of their temporal Prosperity (so far as 'tis truly best for them) and especially of their eternal Happiness. It should prompt us according to the Apostle's Direction, to pray for all Men, in imitation of the Benignity and Good-will of that gracious God, who would have all Men to be saved, and come to the Knowledge of the Truth, 1 Tim. ii. 3. Nay, it should prompt us in Conformity to the truly divine Charity of our dying Saviour, to pray for our very Enemies themselves, even for those that despitefully use and persecute us, Matt. v. 44. Our sincere and enlarg'd Affection to all Men should bear a true Correspondence to the Strain of that Prayer that our Lord hath taught us, *Our Father*, &c. And accordingly should make us offer up our Petitions for the Conversion of the Infidel, and the Reformation of the Christian World, with the like Ardour and Importunity in our devout Desires, as we offer up any Requests for our own Souls, and their final Salvation. For the Salvation of others should be dear to us as our own, and consequently the Object of our fervent Desires. See Rom. x. 1.

Let our Love prompt us to rejoice heartily in the Welfare and Good of others as in our own.

And so we shall certainly do, if we unfeignedly desire it. While others behold the external Prosperity of their Neighbour with an envious, let us behold it

with a pleased Eye and Heart, relishing the like Satisfaction in it as we do in our own. The flourishing State of publick Societies, and of particular Persons, should be to our charitable Souls a most grateful and agreeable Spectacle. So that as one Member does in some degree feel the Ease that another enjoys; so should we (tho' we cannot relish a sensible) yet find a rational Complacency and Satisfaction in the Good of others; and according to the Apostle's Exhortation, *Rejoice with them that rejoice*, Rom. xii. 15. But especially we should take a higher Pleasure in beholding the spiritual Good and Welfare of others.

If the Conversion of a Sinner administer Matter of Joy to the heavenly Inhabitants, we should as cordially congratulate it here on Earth. Nay, our Eye should not be offended with the Lustre of the Gifts and Graces of others, even tho' they excel, and may seem to obscure our own. On the contrary, we should view them with the like Approbation and Pleasure as if they were our own. The Delight that redounds to us from the Welfare of others, should make us ready on all Occasions to conspire with them in their Thanksgivings and Praises for the Mercies they receive, and resent the Favours conferr'd on them who are our Brethren, as particular Obligations on our selves. For so the Apostle requires, *That we should offer our Thanks as well as Prayers for all Men*, 1 Tim. ii. 1. And we may see the Language of their Epistles conformable to this excellent Precept. Nature prompts us to resent the Benefits conferr'd on our Relations with grateful Satisfaction; so should Grace, by enlarging our Love, prompt us to resent the Mercies of God to Mankind in general, and to publick Societies, Nations or Churches, nay, to particular Persons with Thankfulness and Joy.

Let our Love also dispose us to condole the Afflictions and Miseries of others, as unfeignedly as we do our own.

We cannot indeed have that sensitive Perception of them as of our own. But as we may take a rational Estimate of the Greatness of them, so our Love should prompt us to a suitable Sympathy with them. And therefore we are as truly required to weep with them that weep, as to rejoice with them that rejoice, Rom. xii. 15. We should so far resent the Case of others which we see or hear of as our own, as not to be insensible of their Calamities and Grievs. We should, as the Apostle speaks, *Remember those that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer Adversity, as being our selves in the Body*, Heb. xiii. 3. The deplorable Objects of human Misery which we behold, or the Tidings of it which we hear, should deeply affect our Hearts, and move the Bowels of our Compassion towards our suffering Fellow-Creatures. 'Tis one Instance that Job produces of his Integrity, *That he wept for him that was in trouble; and his Soul was grieved for the Poor*, Job xxx. 25. And David mentions it as the Instance of his unfeigned Charity, that when those who had dealt most ungratefully with him were sick, *His Clothing was Sack-cloth, he afflicted his Soul with Fasting; He behaved himself as though it had been his Friend or Brother, and bowed down heavily as one that mourns for his Mother*, Psal. xxxv. 12, &c. But especially should we resent the spiritual Evils that others labour under, or are in imminent Danger of. The perverse Blindness of the Infidel World; the woful Corruptions of the greatest Part of the Christian Church; the Sufferings or Declensions of the Reformed Churches themselves; the daring Insolence and Impenitency of profligate Sinners; the shameful Falls of professed Christians, and the woful Decays of Piety too visible among the best, should even pierce our Hearts with Grief, and often draw compassionate Tears from our Eyes, in our serious Contemplation of it. With what Heaviness and continual Sorrow of Heart did the pious Apostle Paul resent the perverse Unbelief of the Jews, even to that Degree as extorted from him that unusual Strain of Charity, *I could wish that my self were accursed from Christ for my Brethren, my Kinsmen according to the Flesh*, Rom. ix. 3. How strongly did even the Mis-carriages of professed Christians touch and wound his Heart;

Heart; who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended (i. e. made to stumble and fall) and I burn not? 2 Cor. xi. 29. But especially, how did the divine Charity of our blessed Saviour appear in this Instance of it, as a Pattern for our Imitation! How sensibly did he resent that Curse of Mortality, that Sin had brought on humane Nature, in his weeping over the Grave of Lazarus! John xi. 33, 35. How ready were the Bowels of his Compassion to yearn over any miserable Object, that came in his way! Matt. xiv. 14. Luke vii. 13. Mark i. 41. Matt. xx. 34. How strongly were they mov'd towards the Multitude, when he beheld them scatter'd abroad as Sheep without a Shepherd! Matt. ix. 36. With how bitter Grief did he resent the Hardness of Heart that he found in obstinate Sinners! Mark iii. 5. What a Flood of Tears did he shed over Jerusalem, when he consider'd their present Security and Impenitency, and foresaw their approaching Ruin! Luke xix. 41. Thus should Christian Charity give us a tender Fellow-feeling of others' Miseries, and enable us to put on Bowels of Pity and Tenderness towards them, 1 Pet. iii. 8. Phil. ii. 1. Even tho' our own Condition be prosperous, yet the Spectacles of Grief and Woe we are surrounded with, should allay our Joys, and render this Earth to us while we converse in it, a Vail of Tears. But,

3. Our Love to our Neighbour must appear in our Care to avoid the doing him the least Injury and Wrong; and in our Readiness to do him all the Good we have an Ability and Call unto.

Our Love to our Neighbour must appear in our Care to avoid the doing him the least Injury.

He that loves his Neighbour as himself, will be as fearful of wronging or hurting him, as of doing so to himself. Charity thinks no Evil. It does not meditate or plot any Evil against our Neighbour. It should make us as tender of injuring his Reputation by unjust Censures or Calumnies, or by rashly spreading or receiving groundless evil Reports, as we would be of blasting our own. It should as effectually restrain us from doing any thing wrongfully, to the Damage and Prejudice of his just Interests and Rights, as if they were our own. It should make us as fearful of doing any thing to counteract his lawful Designs, or cross his just Pretensions, or blast the Success of his honest Endeavours, as we would be of obstructing our own Affairs. We should no more offer any Violence to his Person, or his Property, than to our own.

But our Love must not rest here in bare Negatives, in doing no ill to our Neighbour, it must appear farther, in our Readiness to do him all the Good we have an Ability for, and Call unto. I add this Limitation.

Because (as I observ'd before) our Power of doing good is but finite and narrow; and the Providence of God has by the Relations wherein we are plac'd, in a great Measure limited the stated and ordinary Exercises of it, though not excluding occasional Objects that are presented to us. We must first extend our beneficent Love to those that are under our immediate Care, and whom Providence has plac'd in a Dependence thereon. But yet it must not be so confin'd unto them, as to hinder us as we have an Opportunity from doing good to all we converse with, especially to them that are of the Household of Faith, Gal. vi. 10. And we should when such proper Objects and Occasions of Charity occur, promote the Good of others, with the like cordial Affection and Zeal as we would our own. We must not content our selves with giving our Neighbour a few good Wishes or good Words that cost us nothing, when 'tis in our Power to express our Love by more substantial and solid Proofs of it. We must love in Deed and in Truth, 1 John iii. 8. We must not put off our starving Brethren with an empty Compliment of, be ye warm'd, be ye clothed, when we are capable to minister to their pressing Necessities, James ii. 15, 16. Love is a busy and active, 'tis a communicative and diffusive Principle, and will therefore render us liberal Benefactors to others, in proportion to our real Abilities. It will open our Purses to the Relief of the Indigent;

it will open our Houses to the Entertainment of the destitute Stranger; it will open our Lips and our Hearts, for the Instruction of the Ignorant, for the advising the Weak, resolving the Doubtful, warning the Impenitent, comforting the Sorrowful and Afflicted, and reconciling the Differences of others; it will make us (according to our Advantages) rich in good Works, forward to contribute what lies in our Power to promote the present or eternal Welfare of others. This divine Principle should render us zealous Imitators and Followers of our blessed Master, who went about doing Good, and whose whole Life was (as it were) one continued Act of beneficent Pity, to the Bodies and Souls of Men. How studious should, especially all that are rich and powerful, be of acting up to that excellent Character that Job gives of himself, in the Vindication of his own Integrity! Job xxix. 12, 13, 14, &c. I deliver'd the Poor that cry'd, the Fatherless, and him that had none to help him. The Blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I caus'd the Widow's Heart to sing for Joy. I was Eyes to the Blind, and Feet was I to the Lame. I was a Father to the Poor, and the Cause that I knew not, I search'd out; and I brake the Jaws of the Wicked, and plucked the Spoil out of his Teeth. And else-where, If I have held the Poor from their Desire, or caus'd the Eyes of the Widow to fail; or have eaten my Morsel myself alone, and the Fatherless have not eaten thereof. If I have seen any perish for want of Cloathing, or any Poor without Covering. The Stranger did not lodge in the Streets, and I open'd my Door to the Traveller, Job xxxii. 16, &c. But especially should our Love extend to the precious Souls of others, and prompt us to the most zealous Endeavours of using the most likely and suitable means in our Power to promote their Salvation, even with the like affectionate Concern as we would our own.

4. Our Love to our Neighbour should appear in all Acts of Self-denial and Condescension, which his greater Good does require and call for.

We then truly love him as our selves, when we can stoop to the meanest Offices of Kindness, and even counteract our own Interest, when it stands in the way of some higher Interest of his. And yet even this, Christian Love should prompt us to. How eminent an Example were the Apostles of this, in that truly noble Charity they express'd to the Souls of Men! How entirely did they renounce all temporal Advantages to promote the Spiritual Welfare of others, becoming poor, to make them spiritually rich! How much more did they renounce their fleshy Ease, by exposing themselves to unwearied and painful Labours! How freely did they disclaim their Liberty, and even embrace the most ignominious Bonds! How cheerfully did they venture upon grievous Hardships and terrible Sufferings! How unconcernedly did they suffer Shame and Reproach! With what undaunted Courage did they hazard the most valuable of all earthly Enjoyments, Life it self, and all from a fervent Desire to promote the Salvation of Souls!

And some parallel Effects should true Christian Love produce in us. It should prompt us not to seek so much our own Profit, as the more valuable Profit of others; especially the gaining and saving their Souls, 1 Cor. x. 24. It should make us look not so much at our own Things, as at those of others, Phil. ii. 4. It should engage us to prefer the publick Good before our own, and even cheerfully to sacrifice our inconsiderable bodily Interest, (our Ease or Reputation, our Estate or Health, nay, our Life it self) when any more valuable Interest of the Welfare of the Church of God may render it necessary. And hence the Apostle John mentions this, as one Instance of our Love to the Brethren, even our laying down our Life for them, 1 John iii. 16. We should by Love be ready to serve one another, Gal. v. 13. Not disdaining to submit to any Act of beneficent Kindness towards the meanest of our Brethren. We should imitate those truly charitable Spirits above, who though they have the Honour of beholding the Face of our heavenly Father, yet think it not beneath them to be ministering Spirits to the Heirs of Salvation here below. Much more

more should we imitate that diviner *Charity* of our blessed Saviour, who became poor to enrich us, who disdain'd not to wash the Feet of his Disciples; who freely stoop'd to the lowest degree of *Abasement* and *Misery*, to advance us to the highest *Dignity* and *Happiness*.

But that I may not go beyond the Bounds of this Discourse, I shall only briefly mention a few more Particulars, wherein our *Christian Love* should express it self.

Our loving our Neighbour as our selves, should appear in pleasing him for his Good, and to his Edification, Rom. xv. 2. And that in conformity to our blessed Saviour, who pleased not himself, v. 3. Our Love should render us easily accessible to all, ready to comply with the various Tempers of Men, so far as is consistent with Duty and Discretion, and willing to entertain all friendly Correspondence, and interchange all kind Offices with them. It should oblige us to all Candour and Courtesy in our Converse with them, and that appearing in our serene Looks, in our gracious Words, and in our obliging and inoffensive Behaviour. For *Charity* does not behave it self unseemly, 1 Cor. xiii. 5.

Our loving our Neighbour as our selves, should restrain all Motions of unruly Anger, and prompt us to a ready Forgiveness of Injuries and Wrongs. Even as we do not usually retain any lasting Anger against, but very easily forgive our selves.

Charity (saith the Apostle) is not easily provoked.

It suffers long, it endureth all Things, 1 Cor. xiii. 5, 6, 7. Nay, it covers all Things, v. 7. i. e. All Matters of Offence. Love is a pure heavenly Flame, that should extinguish in our Breasts that dark Fire of immoderate Passion, that's kindled from beneath. It should prompt us to walk in all Meekness and Long-suffering, forbearing one another, Eph. iv. 1, 2. Should banish all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Clamour, and Evil-speaking, Eph. 4. 31. It should make us imitate the forgiving Disposition of our blessed Saviour, Eph. iv. 32. It should render us kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven us, 1 Thess. v. 15.

It should make us studious of Concord and Peace; and in order thereto, of Unanimity in Judgment and Practice, so far as we can attain it; and in Matters wherein some Difference is unavoidable in this imperfect State of mutual Forbearance. It should prompt us to keep the Unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace, and to confine our Christian Love within no narrower Limits than that of the true Catholick Church, extending it to all that love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity. Love should prompt us to a charitable Construction of the Words and Actions of our Neighbour. It doth not think (or impute) Evil, without cogent and necessitating evidence of Guilt, 1 Cor. xiii. 5. It rather hopes and believeth all Things, where there is any probable Ground to conclude our Neighbour to be innocent of what he may be charg'd with. Nay, Love should prompt us to bear with the Infirmities of others, and to make such compassionate Allowances for the Frailty of human Nature, as we readily expect should be made in our own Case, Rom. xv. 3.

Of so vast and comprehensive Extent is this Duty, that a due Compliance with this Precept would regulate the whole of our Behaviour towards our Neighbour. And O that we could behold a more accurate Conformity in the Lives of professed Christians to this excellent Rule of our Holy Religion! How soon would the Face both of civil and sacred Societies be admirably chang'd! How soon would a large Diffusion of this heavenly Temper bring down much of Heaven upon this Earth! Nay, how much of Heaven would descend therewith into our Hearts, to prepare us for the Happiness of that blessed Society, that are cemented in perfect Love to God, and Love to one another! But,

As this Duty is so important in it self, and considering the woful Depravation of our Nature, so difficult at first to be thoroughly practis'd; so to lay before you the manifold Motives thereto, drawn from the Equity and Reasonableness of the Duty it self, from its Conduciveness to the Glory of God, to the Welfare of Publick Societies, as well as to our own, &c. will take up, and very justly, a distinct Discourse.

S E R M O N XXVIII.

On our LOVE to our NEIGHBOUR.

MATT. xxii. 39, 40.

39. And the second is like to it; Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.
40. On these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.—



Have already explain'd this comprehensive Summary of the second Table, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self. I have also shewn, on what accounts our Lord asserts, that 'tis like to the first and great Command, of loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, &c.

In the Application I inferr'd, the admirable Condescension and Goodness of God, appearing both in this Command it self, and in the Character here given of it. I further inferr'd the Heinousness of the contrary comprehensive Sin of inordinate Self-love, that excludes this Love to our Neighbour. I then urg'd all of you to enquire, how far you comply with this important Command.

And I exhorted all of you to the Practice of it, by setting before you the principal Instances wherein you must shew, that you do thus love your Neighbour as your selves.

I come now in the last Place to urge the Practice of this excellent Duty upon you. And because 'tis a Duty that appears at first difficult to our depraved Nature, and in the conscientious Practice of it, we must be oblig'd to counteract the common Course of the World, (the generality of whom are so deeply sunk into inordinate Self-love) I shall the more enlarge on the Recommending it to you, by several Considerations and Arguments which the Scriptures suggest, and which if duly weigh'd, will powerfully excite us to it.

And

And these Arguments may be drawn,

Partly, from the Authority of God enjoying this Duty upon us.

Partly, from the Equity and Reasonableness of the Duty it self.

Partly, from the beneficial Fruits that would redound from it, both to publick Societies, and to particular Persons.

Partly, from the excellent Examples of it, which we are highly oblig'd to the Imitation of.

I. I shall enforce upon you the Practice of this Duty, of loving your Neighbour as your selves, from the Consideration of God's Authority that has enjoy'd it.

And indeed the Veneration we owe to that sovereign Majesty, should be a sufficient Argument to engage us to the religious Observance of every Command, that bears the Stamp of his awful Authority. Much more should it induce us to a careful Compliance with those Commands, on which he himself lays a peculiar Stress, and as it were sets a Mark of distinguishing Respect upon. What he himself ranks among the [τὰ καθόλου τὰ νόμιμα] the weightier Things of his Law, we should be more eminently studious to know and observe. And though none of the minutest of his Precepts must be neglected; yet these great Commands of all others, must not be left undone. Now I have already shewn you, that the blessed God has so peculiar a regard to this Precept, that he places it next to the first and greatest, of Loving himself with all our Heart, &c. and pronounces it to be like unto it. Nay, he speaks of it as the fulfilling of his Law, i. e. as to one Table of it. So that if we make Conscience of any Duty in Religion, we should of this; if we would in any instance of Obedience comply with his Law, we must in this, which he expresses himself so highly concerned for. We cannot therefore fail of loving our Neighbour as our selves, without manifesting the highest Disrespect to the blessed God himself, by our Violation and Contempt of one of his most important Commands. We cannot refuse our Fellow-Creatures this eminent degree of our Affection, without dethroning him in our Hearts, by a perverse Opposition of our Wills to this considerable Instance of his good and perfect Will. And sure this Argument should be of great Weight with all those, with whom the Authority of God is Sacred and Inviolable; especially when we consider, that the great God will measure the Sincerity of our Obedience, by our particular Regard to this comprehensive Precept; so that our being accepted or rejected by him here, and our final Sentence that will adjudge us to endless Happiness or Misery, depends upon our sincere Observance of it. See to this purpose the Account which our Saviour gives us of the solemn Process of the final Judgment, and the Reasons he assigns of the different Dooms past on the Righteous and the Wicked, which are drawn from their having performed or neglected the genuine Instances of this God-like Love, which I am recommending to you. But of that more may occur under another Head.

II. This Argument drawn from the Authority of God, will be the more forcible if we further consider, the Equity and Reasonableness, the Excellency and Amiableness of the Duty it self.

First, For the Equity and Reasonableness of it, it will appear upon these two Considerations.

1. We our selves desire and expect this degree and measure of Love from others; and therefore should pay it unto them.

For the Equity of that Rule of our blessed Saviour is manifest, that what we would that others do unto us, that we should do unto them; and what we would not that others do to us, we should not do to them, i. e. Supposing our own Desires in respect of others Regular and Just.

Now we are conscious to our selves, that we look for such Love as this from others. We expect they should value and esteem us according to our real Worth and Excellency. We would have them to be affected with our Concerns and Interests, as if they were their own; we expect that they should wish our Welfare

and rejoice in it, and readily improve any Opportunity of promoting it. We look for Pity under our Afflictions and Miseries; for Relief and Supply of our pressing Necessities and Wants, from those that are capable of ministering to them. We think it most reasonable that they should consider our Case as if it were their own. And are therefore prone to complain of Inhumanity and Unmercifulness, or at least Unkindness and want of Love, if our Expectations in these Instances be not complied with.

Should we not then turn the Tables, and even make our own Conscience the impartial Arbitrator, to determine and adjust the Degree and Measure of Affection we owe to others. Should we not consider, that they expect as much from us in the like Circumstances. And that their Expectations are altogether as reasonable as ours. So that it would argue gross Partiality in us, to deny them such solid Instances, and substantial Proofs of our beneficent Love, as we, if in their Case, should think we had a reasonable Claim unto. This were to weigh our Rights and theirs in very unequal Scales, and to demand that measure of Love from others, that we refuse to mete unto them; which is apparent Injustice and Inequality.

But the Equity and Reasonableness of this Duty will further appear if we consider,

2. Our Neighbour is in many respects as our selves; and therefore we should love him as we do our selves.

'Tis no way unusual to see Men's Affections so strongly cemented by the Bands of natural Relation, or even those that are founded on voluntary Contract, that their Relations are to them even as themselves, and the Effects of their Love to them seem rather to exceed, than fall short of those they show to themselves. Even Friendship it self, founded upon likeness of Temper, does so knit their Hearts, that the Scripture uses this Language to express it, Thy Friend that is as thy own Soul, Deut. xiii. 6.

Now to enlarge our Love (which is the grand Design of this excellent Precept) we should consider how nearly ally'd our Neighbour is to us; how far he is the same with our selves, and therefore should be to us in point of Dearness and Affection as our own Souls.

Does it so strangely endear Relations to one another that they are of the same Parentage and Family? And should it not as truly endear every Man to us, that we are all made of one Blood; that we are all descended from the same Stock; that we are all Branches sprung from one common Root, being the Race of the same first Parents? Nay, we are all related to our heavenly Father as his Off-spring; our Bodies being form'd by his Power, and our Spirits breathed into them by him the Father of Spirits.

Is a Likeness in Temper and Disposition, or a Conjunction in secular Designs and Interests, often the Foundation of so strong an Affection among Men? How should the like Considerations entitle every Man to an eminent degree of our Love! For if we regard him either in respect of his Body or Soul, he is as it were a living Image and Picture of our selves. His Body is by the Hand of the same divine Artist, form'd and fashion'd like ours. His Soul is endued with the same noble Faculties, and consequently capable of the like excellent natural Endowments, or of the same gracious and god-like Qualities; nay, of the same heavenly Perfection and Bliss as ours. There is no other Difference between our Neighbour and our selves, but what either refers to our external Circumstances, (which are ordered by the distinguishing Providence of God, that could have appointed him the same Lot with us, or us with him) or in respect of our internal Qualifications; and as to those, all our natural or acquired Endowments are chiefly the Gifts of God; and all our holy and heavenly Dispositions, are much more eminently the Effects of his distinguishing Grace. But still in respect of his reasonable Nature, and the excellent Powers thereof, he is the same with our selves; and therefore our Love should on all those Accounts, prompt us to have the like

like Regard to him, and Concern for his Welfare as for our own.

And how much more should we thus love our *Fellow-Christians* as our selves? For in *them* we behold not only the same *reasonable*, but even the same *Divine* or *God-like Nature* as in our selves. In *them* not only the same *natural*, but the same *moral* and *holy Image* of God shines. They stand related to each other by the same *divine Extraction* and *Birth*, by the same *heavenly Original* and *Descent*. They are *Subjects* of the same *Kingdom* of God and Christ; nay, they are in point of *Interest*, *Members* of the same *civil Society*, or at least of the same *Society of Mankind* with our selves. They are listed as *Soldiers* in the same *spiritual Warfare*, against the same *pernicious Enemies*. They are most nearly *united* and *combin'd* in the same *spiritual Work* and *Exercises*, in the same *Labours*, and often in the same *Sufferings*, and always in the *Prosecution* of the same *grand Interest* and *Design*; and in the same *divine Faith* and *Hope*, as to the glorious *Issue* thereof. How much more then should every *Fellow-Christian* be dear to us, even as our own *Soul*! How justly may all such account themselves *one* in God and Christ (the *grand Centre* of their *Unity*) and how reasonable is it then, they should be *one* in *Heart* and *Affection*!

But further: As this *Duty* carries so much of *Equity* and *Reasonableness*, so,

Secondly, It has no less of *Amiability* and *Excellency* enstamp'd upon it.

'Tis one of those *Things* of which the Apostle Paul saith, *They are lovely, and of good Report*, Phil. iv. 8. An *enlarged Charity* does truly ennoble our *Nature*, and adorn our *Conversation*, attracting the *Eye* and *Admiration* of all that behold it, by its native *Beauty* and *Lustre*. A *diffusive Goodness* and *Love* carries the most irresistible *Charms* with it, to all that see it, or at least to all that feel the *beneficial Warmth* of it.

Other *Endowments*, how glorious soever, when separated from this, render those that are possess'd of them, rather *terrible* than *amiable*, and more the *Objects* of our *Fear* than our *Love*. *Fallen Angels* (as one well observes) have a very eminent measure of *Power* and *Subtily*, but yet are rather *hateful* than *lovely*, because devoid of *heavenly Goodness*, and possess'd with the contrary *hellish* and *hurtful Malignity*. Whereas 'tis this renders the blessed God so perfectly and most deservedly *amiable*, that in him infinite *Power* and *Wisdom* is as it were tempered by immense and boundless *Love*. And accordingly, the more *extensive* and *universal* our *Love* is, the more we resemble that blessed Being, in one of the most *bright* and *glorious* of all his imitable *Excellencies*. No Man was a more beautiful living *Image* of the *invisible God*, than our *blessed Saviour*. And in nothing was he more eminently so, than in that *enlarged Charity* that made him continually go about doing good: As if his whole *Life* was one continued *Act* of *Compassion* and *Love*, either to the *Bodies* or the *Souls* of Men. And the more like we are to him in the *Extent* of our *Love*, the more we do approve our selves to be the *Children* of our *heavenly Father*, by this illustrious *Lineament* and *Stroke* of the *divine Image*. He that is inspir'd with *universal Love* to others, (even proportion'd to that he bears to himself) is in his daily *Actions*, and at least in his *Wishes*, a general *Benefactor* to Mankind. He is as a good *Angel* and *Genius* to all he converses with; so forward and free to minister to them; so industrious and active to promote their *Welfare*; so ready to condescend and stoop to any *Office* of *Kindness* and *Love* for their sakes. And who that are not lost to all sense of *Virtue* and true *Honour*, but must admire and esteem such a generous *Lover* of Mankind! the *Lycaonians* when they beheld the impotent Man restor'd by Paul to the use of his *Limbs*, cry'd out, *The Gods are come down to us in the likeness of Men*, Acts xiv. 11. And may not we more justly regard a Man inspir'd with such *divine unbounded Charity* as a sort of *incarnate Deity*, a *living Image* of God in this lower World. In a Word, there

is nothing on Earth so justly *venerable* and *amiable* as this *universal God-like Goodness*. As on the contrary, nothing renders a Man so deservedly *base* and *despicable* as *narrow Selfishness*; and nothing renders him more *detestable* than *hurtful Malignity*. He that *hates his Brother* is as an *incarnate Fiend* that delights in *Mischief*; or a *Beast of Prey*, that lives upon *Rapine* and *Ravage*, and seizes on whatever comes into his *Paws*. He that *loves him not*, through the *Inordinacy* of *Self-love*, is like the *fordid Hedge-Hog* that wraps himself in his own *Skin*, and turns out his *Prickles* to all others who would come near him. *Selfishness* thus *contracts* the *Soul* of Man, and limits its *Activity* to the narrow *Sphere* of his own *private Good*. *Divine Love* would *amplify* and *enlarge* its *Activity*, to the *Promotion* of the *publick Welfare*. And sure the latter is as deservedly *honourable* and *great*, as the former is justly *mean* and *contemptible*.

But of this more anon.

III. I would further enforce this *Duty* from the *Consideration* of the *beneficial Fruits* that would redound from it to *publick Societies*, and to *particular Persons*.

First, This *Duty* would have a very *beneficial Influence* upon *publick Societies*.

For indeed nothing could contribute more to the real *Happiness* and *Welfare*, nay, to the *Glory* and *Beauty* of *human Societies*, whether *Sacred* or *Civil*, than the large *Diffusion* of this *God-like universal Love*. So far as it do's prevail, 'tis the most powerful *Band* and *Cement* of them. *Divine Love* prompting us to wish and seek every other Man's well-being as our own, would most effectually crush all that *Hatred* and *Envy*, that violent *Emulation* and *Strife* about *secular Honours* or *Riches*, that *Injustice* and *Fraud*, that *Oppression* and *Rigor*, that involve the greatest part of Mankind in perpetual *Animosities* and *Discords*, *Confusions* and *Broils*, nay, often in those bloody *Wars*, that carry with them such *deplorable Ruins* and *Desolations*. If this one *Precept* of Christianity were generally observ'd, what an incredible *Change* would appear in the *Face* of *human Societies*! How would the *amiable Concord* and *Love* of the *Members* thereof, their *enlarged Liberality* and *Bounty*, their ready interchange of all *Offices* of *Kindness* and *Amity*, their *mutual Satisfaction* and *Complacency* in each others *Welfare*, render such *Communities* on Earth a beautiful *Model* of the *concordant heavenly Society*! How pleasant would it be to see *Brethren thus dwell together in Unity*! Psal. cxxxiii. 1. How would this *divine Principle* transform those that are now like *mischievous Fiends*, or like *Savage Beasts* (that are ready to tear all that stand in the way of their *Ambition* and *Interest*) not only into *mild* and *innocent*, but even *useful* and *beneficial Members* of those earthly *Societies*, of which now they are the *Bane* and *Plague*! If once this generous and heavenly *Principle* were implanted in their *Hearts*, they would be so far from seeking to enrich themselves to the *Cost* and *Damage* of others, or to aggrandize themselves on the *Ruins* of the *publick Interest*, that the *common Good* would be more valuable to them than their own, and they would freely sacrifice the latter, to promote and serve the former. And O how happy would *human Societies* be, if all the *Members* thereof were acted by such a *publick Spirit*, and were inspir'd with as cordial a *Zeal* to advance the *Welfare* of their *Fellow-Members* as their own! Whereas the *Prevalency* of the contrary *Temper* (even of a *narrow Selfishness*) is in such *collective Bodies*, what an *Inflammation* or *Tumor* is in the *natural Body*, that draws a *superfluous Quantity* of *Blood* and *Spirits* to one *Member* or *Part*, to the sensible *Weakening* the rest. 'Tis their most *pernicious Disease*, and a dangerous *Symptom* of their *Ruin* and *Dissolution*. Whereas *divine Love*, by promoting a free and more equal *Circulation* of all *secular Advantages* and *Interests*, would consequently promote the *Strength* and *Vigour* of earthly *Kingdoms* and *States*.

And what has been said in Reference to *civil*, is no less applicable to *sacred Societies*. The State of *Christian*

Christian Churches is usually flourishing and prosperous, or declining and weak, accordingly as the Fervour of divine Love does augment or abate. When Charity grows cold, all other Graces usually droop and decay; and as Animosity and Hatred increase, Iniquity abounds. An Union of Affection among all those that love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity, is the Stability and Strength, the Glory and Ornament of those sacred Communities. Whereas when once the Band of Catholick Love that should cement them is loosed, Discord and Contention quickly ensues, and with them Confusion and every evil Work; till their woful Divisions and Fractions make them the Scorn and Contempt, and often the easy Prey of their malignant Enemies. But,

Secondly, This Duty would be attended with very beneficial Fruits redounding from it to particular Persons.

So that 'tis really as much our own Interest as our Duty to love our Neighbour as our selves. We shall reap great Advantages by it, both in this present and in the future State.

I. We shall reap great Advantage by it here, even in this present State.

1. I have already suggested to you, that this God-like Goodness and Love does truly tend to ennoble and perfect our own Nature, by conforming it to the Divine. This very Temper renders a good Man more Excellent than his Neighbour, as being herein far more like to God: And sure this should be accounted by us a very valuable Advantage and Benefit.

2. Again, This universal Love is the most effectual means to conquer the Enmity of others, and to interest us in their Love.

I need not enlarge in presenting to you the various Mischiefs and Miseries that spring from a State of Enmity with others. And sure nothing can so effectually tend to prevent them as the steady constant Exercise of enlarged and beneficent Love. *Who is he that will do you hurt if ye be Followers of that which is good?* (or Imitators of him that is good, as the Original may be fitly render'd) 1 Pet. iii. 13. Those must be barbarously wicked indeed that can persist to hate him, that takes all possible Occasions to do them good; that can cherish Rancour in their Hearts against one that constantly bears and discovers nothing but Affection and Good-will to them; that can plot Mischief against one that not only never wrong'd them, but has been ever ready to benefit and oblige them. "Charity, (if any thing) will (as one well speaks) melt the hardest Heart, and charm the fiercest Spirit; it will bind the most violent Hand, still the most abusive Tongue, and reconcile the most prejudic'd and offended Mind. It could make a revengeful Esau run into the Embraces of his affectionate Brother Jacob; and cause a malicious Saul to break out into the most affectionate Resentments of the Kindness of David, Gen. xxxii. 20. compar'd with xxxiii. 4. 1 Sam. xxiv. 16, 17. 1 Sam. xxvi. 17, 21. So admirably did Love triumph over their inveterate Prejudices and rooted Passions. Nor does it only conquer the Enmity of others, but usually engages their Love, and draws out the beneficial Effects of it, when we have most occasion for them. A Man noted for universal Goodness and Love, can scarce fail of being generally beloved, especially by all to whom his diffusive Charity has reach'd: So that his Charity does as it were encompass him with Friends and Beneficiaries, that will be as so many Guards of his Safety, and Supports of his Interest.

Who will not be forward to vindicate his Innocence, who has been most tender of the Reputation of others? Who will not comfort him under his Afflictions, that has shewn a warm Sympathy with others in their Miseries? Who will refuse to relieve his Necessities (should he be reduc'd to any, which at least rarely happens) whose Heart and Hand have been open to supply the Wants of many others? Every one will think it a common Duty and Interest to assist such a common Benefactor and Friend to all.

3. Again, this universal Love greatly contributes to our inward Serenity and Peace, Satisfaction and Delight.

It banishes all those hurtful and boisterous Passions, that so often disturb and disquiet, perplex and torment us. Malice and Envy, Rancour and Revenge, can have no place in a Heart fill'd with divine Love, that prompts it to wish and delight in the Good of others, and to resent their Miseries with Grief and Sorrow. Nay, we cannot easily indulge immoderate Anger and Wrath, against those we sincerely love. Enlarged Love would greatly tend to extinguish that boundless Ambition and insatiable Covetousness, that puts Men on so restless Toyl, and anxious Cares to climb above others, or grasp what they enjoy, or to struggle with them as Competitors in point of worldly Interest. Nay, it should in a great Measure beget in us a Confidence in others, and remove those Fears that result from Jealousy and Distrust. For a good Man is ready to apprehend himself guarded from any mischievous Assaults of others by the Innocence of his own inoffensive and obliging Behaviour towards them. On all these accounts divine Love conduces to the maintaining a constant Calm, and chearful Serenity in our own Souls, as it frees them from the Annoyance of such vexatious Passions as these are.

Nay, this universal Love greatly conduces to our Satisfaction and Delight.

For indeed it does in Effect put us into the Possession of whatever Good others enjoy, by enabling us to relish a real and solid Pleasure in it. It does in a very just Sense, and to a considerable Degree, render the Welfare of others our own. 'Tis true, we have not the same sensitive Perception of it as they have; but this divine Principle will enable us to take a rational and real Complacency in it. Even as an affectionate Father rejoices in the Prosperity of his Children, or a Man in the Successes of a Friend, as if he himself enjoy'd what they do. Even so will this divine Love enlarge our Hearts to resent the Well-being of any of our Fellow-Creatures, especially the extensive Welfare of publick Societies, with the like Satisfaction that we would our own. Their Houses and Lands, their Treasures and Possessions, their Honours and Preferments, but especially their spiritual Gifts and Graces, will be to us as our own, by administering Matter of solid Contentment and Joy to us: And this indeed is the most easy and cheap, the most effectual and compendious, the most innocent and commendable Way of making all the World our own. And such a Propriety in all Things, and such real Comfort redounding thence, no Man can hinder us from, or dispossess us of. So that whereas 'tis the discontented Language of covetous and envious Self-love: "O that this House, or Field, or those Herds were my own!" 'Tis the pleas'd Language of divine Love, *They are to me as my own*, because they are enjoy'd by those I love, and in whose Welfare I truly delight, as in my own. And sure we cannot imagine any Pleasure more refin'd and excellent, and more truly God-like than what results from such a noble Exercise of disinterested Love.

This renders us in an eminent Degree like to the blessed God, who is represented to us as rejoicing in his own Works, and delighting in the Happiness of his own Creatures, Psal. civ. 31. For this renders the Welfare and Happiness of our Fellow-Creatures a real Accession to our own. But,

II. The Beneficialness of divine Charity will more clearly appear, if we consider the great Advantages redounding from it, that relate to our future State.

For Charity prompts us to make the best Improvement of our present Talents, and thereby most effectually secures the divine Acceptance and Reward.

Nay, it does greatly dispose and suit our Spirits to the Blessedness of the heavenly State.

1. This God-like Love prompts us to make the best Improvement of all our present Talents, in order to our comfortable Account of them.

Have we any eminent Gifts and Abilities? Love will prompt us to employ them for the Instruction of the Ignorant, Resolution of the Doubting, Warning the Impenitent,

Impenitent, Encouraging the Serious, and Comforting the Afflicted. Have we *Authority* or *Interest* in the World? *Love* will make use of it for the Protection and Defence of the Innocent and Good, for the Restraint of Injustice and Oppression, for supporting the Interest of true Religion, and promoting all Designs that aim at the publick Welfare and Good. Have we *Estates* or *Riches*? *Love* will make us faithful Stewards in the Distribution of them, not *lavishing* them away in profuse and prodigal Expence, not *hoarding* them up, and burying them as uselefs Talents in the Earth, but *laying* them out for the Relief of the Necessities of our indigent Brethren, or some way for the publick Good. So far then as we are acted by this God-like *Love*, we shall be *publick Blessings* in our Day and Age, and use our Talents to the best Purpose for our future Account.

And accordingly we have great Assurance that our conscientious *Practice* of this *Duty* shall be graciously accepted, and liberally rewarded.

The blessed God will highly approve such an *Imitation* of his own diffusive Goodness. He takes a peculiar Complacency in every good Man, as a most amiable living *Image* of himself. Nay, he declares that he respects all the *Love* we extend to others for his sake, as the most solid Instance and Proof of our *Love* to himself; and will accordingly recompense it. In as much as we have done it to the least of his Children, or his Creatures, he will take it as done unto himself. What we give to them, he accounts as lent to himself, and is pleas'd to rank himself our Debtor for it, from whom we may expect to be repaid with abundant Advantage and Interest. Those that have been merciful themselves to their Brethren, shall most plenteously share in his Mercy. Those that have sown liberally to the Relief of others, shall most liberally reap at his Hands in the Day of final Retribution. What *Treasures* we have for his sake expended on the Poor, shall be exchanged for far better *Treasures* laid up for our selves in Heaven; and the *Friends* we have made by our charitable Use of deceitful Riches (that Mammon of Unrighteousness) shall receive us into eternal Habitations, Luke xvi. 9. Such abundant Encouragement have we to this *Duty* from the Prospect of the glorious *Recompence* of it. And what is here suggested, is abundantly confirm'd by the Reason our Lord assigns for the Sentence he passes on the Righteous, drawn from the Instances of their God-like Goodness and Charity (which I had occasion to mention before).

2. This God-like Goodness and Love does greatly dispose us for the Blessedness of the heavenly State.

And hence the Apostle prefers Charity or Love (inclusive of Love to Men as well as God) before Faith and Hope, as a Grace that will then abide, and have its Exercise perfected, when the Exercise of our Faith and Hope shall cease, 1 Cor. xiii. ult. And our imperfect Exercise of it here comes nearest to the Employment and Work of the heavenly State. He that loves the blessed Jesus (in his human Nature) as the most amiable Image of God; he that accordingly loves Angels and glorify'd Saints on the Account of their more eminent Conformity unto him; he that loves all Men here proportionably to their Likeness to God, as they are his Creatures or his Children; he that desires and rejoices in the publick Welfare of sacred and civil Societies, even more than in his own; he is in some Measure moulded for Heaven, that Element and Seat of perfect Love. His Disposition is attemper'd to the Society of those blessed Spirits, whose Love capacitates them to receive a new Addition to their own Blessedness from the Felicity of others, nay, to resent a higher Satisfaction in the Glory of God, than in their own Felicity. And O how sweet and delightful are the Exercises of God-like Love, to those heavenly Souls in whom the divine Spirit has enkindled this Spark of celestial Fire! How do they give us some Foretaste of Heaven it self, in whose perfect Joys divine Love is one principal Ingredient!

Lastly, I would farther recommend this *Duty* from those excellent Examples of it, which we are highly obliged to imitate.

How glorious a Pattern of boundless Love is the blessed God himself! How vast is the Extent, how rich and liberal, how constant and uninterrupted are the Streams of his diffusive Love! He is good to all, and his tender Mercies are over all the Works of his Hands! Psal. cxlv. 9. His unexhausted Bounty reaches out its liberal Hand to supply the Wants of every living Thing, (See Ver. 15, 16).

Much more does his Benignity and Care extend to all his reasonable Creatures. Even their Unworthiness and Guilt does not stop the Current of his daily Benefits. While they are wretchedly forgetful of him, he does not leave them without the daily Witnesses and Monitors of his Goodness, giving them Rain and fruitful Seasons, and filling their Hearts with Food and Gladness, Acts xiv. 17. He causes his Sun to shine on the Just, and the Unjust, and his Rain to descend on the Evil as well as the Good, Matt. v. 45. And shall not we write after so amiable a Copy as this? Shall not we extend our Affection to those whom the blessed God makes the daily Objects of his beneficent Love? Are they not below his Notice and kind Regard, and shall they be thought unworthy of our Love? Nay, shall we not, in conformity to his Example, extend our Love to our Enemies themselves, and endeavour (as he) to overcome their Evil with our Good? Especially when we are in Gratitude so deeply oblig'd hereto; for how hopeless and remediless had our Case been, had not the sovereign Grace and matchless Love of God reach'd out its compassionate Hand to recover and save us, while we were cherishing the most unreasonable Enmity in our Hearts against him? And shall not we, for his sake, shew that tender Pity and forgiving Love to our Enemies that we experienc'd when we were his?

Nay, let us consider the marvellous Example of Love that our blessed Saviour has set before us.

His Life (as I suggested before) was, as it were, one continued Act of Pity and Love to the Bodies and Souls of Men. But especially his voluntary dying in our Place and Stead was a most unparallel'd Instance of it. So ardent was his Love, that he prefers our Interest before his own, and sacrifices his Life for the Redemption of ours. Not only does he pray for the Pardon of his malicious Enemies, with his dying Breath, but he sheds his precious Blood to purchase it. So dear to him was our Salvation, that he submitted to the Curse we had deserved, to recover our Right to the forfeited heavenly Felicity. So far did his matchless Love transcend the highest Expression of ours.

And shall not we imitate that wondrous Love of his, which we our selves are the Instances of? Shall we not love one another, as Christ also loved us, and gave himself an expiatory Sacrifice for us? Eph. v. 2. Nay, shall not we love our Enemies, when he laid down his Life for us, while we were perverse Enemies, that he might reconcile us to God? Shall we think those unworthy of our Love for whom the Son of God did not disdain to shed his precious Blood? Did not all their Mis-deserts and Guilt discourage him from giving them this matchless Demonstration of his affectionate Pity, and shall it debar them from a Share in ours? What would have become of us, if our blessed Saviour had dealt so with our selves?

So that we cannot fail of enlarging our Love to all Men, unless we wretchedly forget our own Condition and Circumstances, when the Eye of our God and Saviour first pitied us, and his Bowels first yearned towards us. Nay, unless we counter-act the strongest Obligations that so transcendent Love has laid upon us, to the Imitation of it in our Carriage towards our Fellow-Creatures, who can never be so unworthy of our Love as we were of God's. And sure we should not be insensible of the admirable Force of that Reasoning of the inspir'd Apostle; he had told us, That herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins, 1 John iv. 10. And thence he immediately draws this Inference, Beloved, If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. One might naturally have expected that he should rather have

have infer'd, *If God so loved us, we ought to love him.* And that is indeed a practical *Inference* we should never forget to draw from it. But he chooses rather to leave the Drawing that reasonable Conclusion to our own Ingenuity and Gratitude; and insists upon this Inference I have mention'd, to intimate to us, That a gracious God had this in his Eye and Design, in giving us so matchless a Demonstration of his own Love to us, to lay upon us the highest and most endearing Obligation to this great Duty of *loving one another.* And we then only have a just Sense of his infinite Love, when it inspires us with that mutual Love of which he has set so glorious an Example before us.

And thus I have briefly run thro' these two excellent Duties, of the Love of God, and of our Neighbour, which contain such an admirable Summary of all practical Religion.

And our blessed Saviour could not in more emphatical Language represent to his Hearers, the Jews, the vast Importance and Moment of them, than by what he here subjoins, *That on these two Commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.* The Expression (as one well observes) carries an Allusion to the Custom of the Jews, of hanging up their Laws in a publick Place to

be seen of all Men. And our Saviour thereby intimates to us, that whatever had been deliver'd either in the Law of Moses, or in the Writings of the Prophets, relating to our Duty towards God and Man, was reducible to these two comprehensive Heads, and virtually contain'd therein. And the Apostle Paul has a plain Reference hereto, when he represents *divine Love as fulfilling of the Law,* Rom. xiii. 9. *beloved and of a*

How studiously then should we all of us endeavour to get these two extensive Commands written in our Hearts, that they may be legible to all in our daily Conversation! How solid and clear an Evidence will our Conformity to them by divine Love be, of our filial Relation to God! What an attractive Glory and Lustre will it cast upon our holy Profession! What an admirable Tendency will it have to render our Converses with Men eminently beneficial and useful, as well as exemplary! How will it con-naturalize and mould our own Souls for the heavenly State, and even give us in our own excellent Temper some sweet Foretastes of it. For that excellent Passage of the Apostle John carries its own Evidence along with it; *God is Love, and he that thus dwells in Love, dwells in God, and God in him,* 1 John iv. 16.

S E R M O N XXIX.

On LOVE to an unseen SAVIOUR.

1 PET. i. 8. First Clause.

Whom having not seen ye love.



AMONG the three Things that pious Austin did often wish that he could have seen, one was Christ Jesus in the Flesh. And, no doubt, we should all of us have thought it a singular Advantage to have been with his Apostles the Eye and Ear-witnesses of his divine Miracles and heavenly Doctrine, of his exemplary Life, and his bitter Passion; of his glorious Resurrection and Ascension. But blessed be God, that however desirable such a Sight of our incarnate Redeemer would have been, the Want of it is no Obstruction to our lively Faith in him, and ardent Love to him, nor to that unspeakable Joy that results from the vigorous Exercise of both. Nay, as the Want of that actual Sight will enhance the Value of our Faith and Love, so it will heighten the Reward of them. For so much those Words of our blessed Lord to Thomas import, *Because thou hast seen, thou hast believed: Blessed are those that have not seen, and yet have believed,* John xx. 29.

The Apostle directs this Epistle to the Strangers scattered through Pontus Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, whom he describes as Elect, according to the Foreknowledge of God the Father, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, and Sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus, Ver. 1, 2. On their Account he presents his solemn Thanksgivings to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus, who had by the Resurrection of Christ begot them to the lively Hope of an heavenly Inheritance, and did now, by his powerful Grace, preserve them for the full and final Possession of it, Ver. 3, 4, 5. From the Consideration of that, he endeavours to support them under all their present Afflictions

and Sufferings, which only tended to discover the Sincerity of their divine Faith, (as the Fire does the Purity of true Gold) and thereby to prepare them for that honourable and glorious Reward of it, which they expected at the final Appearance of their blessed Saviour. And having mention'd that blessed Saviour to them, he breaks out into this Rapture of devout Affection in the Text, *Whom having not seen ye love, &c.*

He speaks here of such as had never personally convers'd with the Son of God here below, and consequently of such whose Case in that respect is the same with ours, who live so many hundred Years after the Time of our blessed Saviour's coming in the Flesh.

From the Words we may therefore observe,

I. *'Tis the genuine Character of true Christians, that they are sincere Lovers of Christ.*

II. *'Tis no Obstruction to their sincere Love of him, that they have not seen him.*

III. *Yet 'tis the Commendation of their Love, that 'tis fix'd on that blessed Saviour whom they have never seen.*

Of these in their Order: And,

I. *'Tis the genuine Character of true Christians, that they are sincere Lovers of Christ.*

Having often had occasion to treat on this Subject, The Love of Christ, I shall not here enlarge upon it as so important a Subject would deserve, and might require, but content my self briefly to suggest,

First, What this Love of Christ includes.

Secondly, What is requisite to the Sincerity of it: And,

Thirdly, How genuine a Character it is of all true Christians.

First, Let us briefly consider, *What the Love of Christ includes.*

And accordingly our Love to him includes various Acts suitable to the various Grounds of *Amiability* in that blessed Object.

1. If we regard the *Excellency* of the Object, our Love to that blessed Saviour includes our honourable Thoughts of him, our high Esteem and Veneration for him.

And such a profound Veneration we should entertain for him, if we either consider the *Dignity* of his Person, or the *Excellency* of his Undertaking and Office.

If we consider the *Dignity* of his Person, he is every way worthy of our affectionate Esteem, as he is God manifested in the *Flesh*, the *eternal Word made Flesh*, the only begotten Son of God, that condescended to dwell in our infirm Nature as his *Tabernacle*, and to converse with sinful Men here below. So that both the spotless Innocence and Purity of that human Nature he assum'd, and the Glories of that eternal God-head that dwell bodily therein, do represent him as most amiable and infinitely worthy of our most admiring and adoring Thoughts.

And it should heighten our Veneration for him to consider the *Excellency* of his Undertaking and Office.

For what can recommend him more to our highest Esteem, than to consider him as the compassionate and powerful Mediator that comes on that glorious Errand, to save our lost and perishing Nature, to re-establish a blessed Amity and Peace between an offended God, and offending Man, by restoring us to the divine Image and Favour, and thereby to the Hopes of that Glory and Happiness from which we fell? He cannot but appear most amiable to us, as he is the great Prophet of his Church, and the Light of this lower World, who came from the Bosom of the Father, to give us the most perfect Declaration of his Will, and the most glorious Offers of his infinite Love. He is yet more amiable, as he is the great High-Priest over the House of God, who by once offering up himself on Earth, obtain'd eternal Redemption for us, and who in Virtue of that one Obligation, is our perpetual and powerful Intercessor in the highest Heavens. He appears yet more glorious and adorable, as the Administrator of the divine Kingdom here below, as the Head of his Church, and Head over all Things to it, and as the final Judge of the Quick and the Dead. All these illustrious Characters that belong to him as the true Messiah, do concur to represent him as the most deserving Object of our affectionate Veneration.

2. If we regard our Relation to him, and Interest in him, our Love includes,

Partly, Our ardent Desires of such a special Relation to him, and Interest in him.

We love him when we are ambitious of the nearest Union and Alliance to him. When we covet it as our highest Honour and Happiness to be his Disciples under his heavenly Instruction; to be his Clients under his powerful mediatory Protection; to be his Subjects and Followers under his gracious Conduct and Government; to be the living Members of his mystical Body, and the Joint-Heirs of his eternal Kingdom. When thus to win or gain Christ, by securing an Interest in all the invaluable Blessings of that everlasting Covenant that he is the Mediator of, is the Sum of all our Wishes and Desires.

And accordingly, our Love to him does also farther imply, our satisfying Delight in such a special Relation to him, and Interest in him, so far as we can attain a comfortable Persuasion of it.

We then love him, when we value such a Relation to him, and Interest in him above Ten Thousand Worlds, and account all Things but as contemptible Dross and Dung in Comparison thereof. When we account our vital Communion with him (in all the Influences of his sanctifying Spirit, in all the Virtue of his atoning Blood; in all the Blessings of his everlasting Covenant) to be our highest Privilege, and rejoice more in it, than if the whole World were our Possession: When we contem-

plate with the highest Pleasure and Satisfaction his being made of God unto us, Wisdom and Righteousness, Sanctification and complete Redemption. For Love always implies our high Complacency in the Object, so far as 'tis enjoy'd, or we have the comfortable Prospect of such Enjoyment.

3. If we regard the numerous and invaluable Benefits that we derive from our blessed Saviour; so our Love to him includes our affectionate and grateful Sense of all our unconceivable Obligations to him.

For Gratitude is necessarily imply'd in our Love to an eminently kind Benefactor. And so does our Love to the blessed Jesus imply our most thankful Resentment of his marvellous and transcendent Love, and of all the inestimable Fruits of it. We then love him, when our Souls are most sensible of, and deeply affected with his matchless Compassion and Condescension to us, and are taken up in adoring admiring Thoughts of it. When we contemplate all the various and admirable Benefits that we derive from him, with a most grateful Apprehension of our being indebted for them to his unexampled Pity and Love. When the Consideration of all those Blessings of his Covenant, which he has enstated us in the Possession, or rais'd us to the Hope of, engraves an indelible Law of Gratitude upon our Hearts to that merciful Saviour and Lover of Souls.

Again,

4. If we regard the Interests of the blessed Jesus himself, so our Love implies our highest Good-will thereto.

We may be truly said to love others, when we wish well to them, when we regard their Interests as our own, and feel in our selves a strong Propension to do them all the Good we are capable of, and relish a true Delight in doing it. And tho' as to our blessed Saviour, our Goodness does not (properly) extend to him, and he can receive no real Benefit from us, yet since he is pleas'd to regard the Success of his mediatory Undertaking (in the glorifying God, and saving of Souls) as his Interest. We then truly love him, when we wish well to that blessed Interest of his; when we earnestly desire the Advancement and Enlargement of his Kingdom; when we are prompted with an ardent Zeal to promote it according to all the Advantages put into our Hands; when we rejoice to see the Pleasure of the Lord prosper in his Hands; when we resent with the highest Satisfaction whatever tends to exalt his Honour and Glory, and to render the Administrations of his mediatorial Kingdom successful here below. When as John the Baptist speaks of himself, *We are as the Friends of the Bridegroom, who rejoice to see him enthron'd in the Hearts of those that make up his mystical Spouse*, and are pleas'd to see him increase in Honour and Glory, even though we should decrease, John iii. 29.

Such a Variety of Acts does our Love to Christ include, according to the different Grounds of *Amiability* in this glorious Object.

I come therefore,

Secondly, To consider, *What is requisite to the Sincerity of our Love to him.*

Now to the Sincerity of our Love to him, 'tis requisite,

1. That our Love with respect to the Object should be entire, i. e.

Every Thing in that blessed Saviour must be amiable to us. Every Part of his Undertaking and Office must recommend him to our affectionate Veneration. We must love him, not only as our Prophet and Teacher, our Propitiation and our Advocate, but as our Head and Lord. We must as truly approve of his gracious Design to rescue us from the Dominion of Sin, as to redeem us from the Punishment due to it. We must love him, as the Restorer of our lapsed Nature to the Image of God, as well as the Restorer of our guilty Souls to his Favour. He must be as truly dear to us, as the Author of our Sanctification, as he is as the Author of our final Redemption and Salvation. We must as truly value his Scepter as we do his Cross, and as sincerely love his just Government, as we do his powerful Mediation.

2. Our

2. Our Love with respect to the Measure or Degree of it, must be *superlative*.

We do not sincerely love our blessed Saviour, if we love him not above all. For since he is so infinitely amiable, since his Love to us is so transcendently great; since the Benefits we derive from him are *invaluable*, we do owe him an *unrival'd* Degree of Affection, in which nothing in this World must be allow'd to stand *Competitor*. And so much our blessed Lord plainly intimates to us, when he tells us, *That whosoever loves Father or Mother, Son or Daughter, more than him, is not worthy of him*, Matt. x. 37. Nay, elsewhere we are told, *That except a Man hate Father and Mother, Wife and Children, and Brethren, and Sisters, yea, and even his own Life, he cannot be his Disciple*, Luke xiv. 26. i. e. Except he comparatively hate them, so as to be willing to renounce them whenever he must either forsake them, or forsake his blessed Lord.

And to add no more.

3. Our Love to Christ must produce *visible Effects*, and *Fruits*.

It must be a Love, not in Word and Tongue only, but in Truth and in Deed. It must therefore prompt us to zealous Endeavours of advancing his Kingdom; it must engage us to a cheerful Obedience to his Commands. For he himself makes this the certain and unerring Test of it, *If ye love me, keep my Commands*, John xiv. 14. And then are ye my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you, John xv. 14.

Having thus briefly shown, what is requisite to the Sincerity of our Love to our blessed Saviour, I proceed, Thirdly, To shew, that this is the genuine Character of all true Christians.

And this I need not enlarge upon.

The New Testament does every where describe them by this Character.

They are such as love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity, Eph. vi. 24. And so Essential is this Character to every true Christian, that the Apostle makes the Want of it a certain Mark of one that deserv'd to be utterly rejected from Christian Communion, *If any Man (saith he) love not our Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha*, 1 Cor. xvi. 22. He looks upon such an one as under a dreadful Curse indeed, and if he persisted in this wretched Disaffection to the Son of God, deserves to be devoted to remediless Perdition.

And that this must be the genuine Character of every true Christian, is hence evident, because 'tis the genuine Tendency of the whole Gospel to form this *superlative* Love of Christ in our Hearts. We cannot sincerely believe what the Gospel reveals concerning the Dignity of his Person, and concerning the Excellency of his mediatorial Undertaking, concerning his matchless Love to us, and our unconceivable Obligations to him, but we must ardently love him. Much less will he own those for his, and admit them to a Communion with him in all his invaluable Benefits, who do not enthrone him in their Hearts, and make him the Object of their *superlative* Affection.

Having thus consider'd this Character of all true Christians, that they are sincere Lovers of Christ; I proceed to consider the

1st Observation, viz. That 'tis no Obstruction to our sincere Love of Christ, that we have not seen him with our bodily Eyes.

That 'tis in Matter of Fact no Obstruction to our sincere Love of Christ, is evident from the Experience of many Thousands and Millions in every Age, who have liv'd since the time of his Manifestation in the Flesh; but who not only have born a *superlative* Affection to him, but have given the most demonstrative Proof of it, by their ardent Zeal for his Glory, by their cheerful and costly Obedience to his Commands, and by sacrificing their dearest Interests in the World to his Service.

All therefore that I shall attempt under this Head, is to shew, That it ought not in Reason to be any Hindrance or Obstruction to our sincere Love of Christ, that we have not seen him with our bodily Eyes.

And that will appear if we consider these two Things.

1. That we have sufficient Evidence of the Truth of what the Gospel declares concerning him.

2. That our Belief thereof is greatly confirm'd, by what we our selves have the inward Sensation and Experience of.

1. We have sufficient Evidence of the Truth of what the Gospel declares concerning our blessed Saviour, in order to the recommending him to our highest Love.

The Matters of Fact relating to the Birth, to the Life, to the Doctrine of Christ, and the Miracles he wrought for the Confirmation of it; to his Death, and Resurrection, and glorious Ascension, are related to us by those that were Eye and Ear-witnesses of them. By Persons of known Fidelity and Integrity, who could not themselves be deceiv'd as to those Matters of Fact (which were the plainest Objects of their Senses) and who have given the most satisfying Proof that they had no Intention to deceive us. For besides that, they declared these Truths in the very Age wherein those Affairs were transacted, and that in the Face of the most inveterate Enemies, who had all imaginable Advantage as well as Inclination to convict them of Falshood, if that had been possible; and that they seal'd these Truths with their Blood: I say, besides this, their Testimony was confirm'd by so extraordinary Gifts, and miraculous Operations of that Holy Spirit, which was pour'd out upon them by that blessed Saviour, whose Gospel they publish'd; that if we suppose their Narratives to be lying Fables, we must suppose the God of Truth to be accessory to the Propagating the Imposture by the most glorious Exertions of his own Almighty Power. And what they declar'd concerning the blessed Jesus, was so visible an Accomplishment of the Predictions of the Old Testament, concerning the promised Messiah, as greatly confirms the Truth of their Relations, and the glorious Characters that they give of him, as the Son of God, and the Saviour of the World. And the Doctrine they suppose him to have deliver'd, is so worthy of God, so conformable to the Principles of natural Religion, so proper to supply the woful Defects of natural Light, so conducive to advance the Glory of God in the Recovery and Salvation of Men, that it carries in it self the brightest Characters of its own divine Original. And the spotless Purity of his Life was so suitable to the Excellency of his Doctrine, as to render it the more evident, that he came from Heaven to direct us in the Way thither.

In a Word. No supernatural Revelation can be suppos'd more worthy of God, none cou'd be brought us by a more credible Messenger than the blessed Jesus; none cou'd be more conspicuously attested by numerous and uncontrolled Miracles; none cou'd be handed down to us by more credible and unsuspected Witnesses; no Witnesses cou'd produce clearer Evidences of their own divine Inspiration, and consequently of their own Veracity; and none could give a more solemn Confirmation of the Truth of their Doctrine, by their steady Adherence to it under the greatest Persecutions, and the laying down their own Lives in the Defence of it. So that we cannot dis-believe their Relation of these Matters of Fact, without destroying all human Faith, and what is much more, without destroying all divine Faith, and rejecting the clearest Evidences that can ever be expected of a divine Revelation. We have therefore all possible Reason to believe in, and consequently to love that blessed Saviour, tho' we never saw him. Especially if we add,

2. That our Belief of what the Gospel declares concerning our blessed Saviour, is greatly confirm'd by our own inward Sensation and Experience.

We do not, in this Case, barely rely upon the Testimony of others; for as the Apostle John speaks, 1 John v. 10. *He that believes on the Son of God, hath the Witness (or Testimony τὴν μαρτυρίαν) in himself*. We have actually felt and found those glorious Effects of his saving Power that do fully convince us of the Truth of what the inspir'd Apostles declare concerning him.

We

We do find a marvellous and glorious *Light* diffus'd into our Minds by his heavenly Doctrine, and by the Illumination of his holy Spirit, whereby we that were once *Darkness*, are now made *Light in the Lord*. So that we may truly say as the *blind Man* when restor'd to his Sight, *One thing I know, that whereas I was blind, now I see*, John ix. 25. We do find a vast Distinction in Point of divine Knowledge, between the *Christian* and the *Infidel World*; nay, in the *Christian World*, between those *Nations* where this *Light* is set on a *Candlestick*, and where 'tis hid under a *Bushel*; and we find in Point of practical and saving Knowledge, no less Difference between those that cordially embrace divine Truth, and those that hold it in *Unrighteousness*. Nay, all true Christians do find by happy Experience, the transforming Efficacy of the Gospel of Christ as accompany'd with the powerful Influences of his renewing sanctifying Spirit. They have felt a divine Energy and Virtue therein, to mortify their most unruly Passions, to subdue their most inveterate Lusts, to re-instamp the amiable Image of God upon their Souls, and to conform them to that of his incarnate Son; to elevate their carnal Affections towards Heaven, to beget them to the living Hope of an incorruptible Inheritance, and to mould and frame them for a blessed Share and Lot among the *Saints in Light*. They have found a marvellous Virtue in the Doctrine of a crucify'd Saviour, to dispel their guilty Fears, to revive their despondent Hopes; to infuse into their Consciences that Peace that passes all Understanding, and that Joy that is unspeakable and full of Glory; and these are truly such great and God-like Effects, these are such solid and substantial Instances of the saving Power of Christ, as leave them no reason to doubt of the Truth of what the Gospel relates concerning him. So that they may truly say, in Reference to those Eye and Ear Witnesses, by whom these Matters of Fact have been transmitted to them, what the Inhabitants of *Sychar* said to the *Samaritan Woman*, *Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him our selves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the World*, John iv. 42. So may we say, now we believe, not merely on the Report and Saying of these inspir'd Historians, but also because we our selves have felt the blessed Effects of his saving Grace in our own Souls; and therefore know by happy Experience, *That he is indeed the Saviour of the World*. [See the two Sermons on 1 John v. 10.]

And, if our having never seen that blessed Saviour be, on both these Accounts, no rational Objection against our believing what the Gospel relates concerning him, it should be no Obstruction to that superlative Love of him that such a sincere Belief should inspire us with. Tho' we have never seen him, yet we have the highest Reason to believe in him, and consequently to love him.

But then I must add what occurs in the

III^d and last Observation, viz. *That 'tis a Commendation of our Love to that blessed Saviour, that we love him tho' we never saw him*.

For what our Saviour observes in reference to our Faith, is equally applicable to our Love; *Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; but blessed are those that have not seen and yet have believed*, John xx. 29. No wonder that those should believe his Resurrection, who actually saw him expire on the Cross, who beheld him laid in his Grave, and who not only saw him when risen, but actually convers'd with him, and had with *Thomas* the Advantage and Privilege to see the Print of the Nails, and to thrust their Hands into his Side. But to believe it upon the Testimony of others, who were the chosen Witnesses of Christ on the Account of those Credentials he sent them with, when we never saw it our selves, is a more difficult, and therefore a more noble and commendable Act of divine Faith. This discovers an ingenuous Temper of Mind, sincerely inquisitive after divine Truth, dispos'd to entertain such satisfying Evidence of it as God sees fit to give, tho' in some respects, short of that Evidence of Sense which the A-

postles themselves had. And the like I may say in reference to our Love of that blessed Saviour. To be as deeply affected with his heavenly Doctrine, as if we our selves had heard those gracious Words that proceeded from his Mouth; to have our Hearts as irresistibly drawn to him in ardent Affection, as if we had stood at the Foot of the Cross, and been the Spectators of his Sufferings there; to love him as fervently as if we had, with the beloved Disciple, lain in his Bosom, or beheld the Agonies of his dying Love; for us to long as much for his glorious second Appearance, as if we had with the Apostles seen him ascending into the highest Heavens, this argues a nobler Strain of Love. For our Faith and Love are so much the more commendable and rewardable, when destitute of this Advantage of sensible Evidence, which theirs had. And therefore doubtless the Apostle speaks this to the Praise of these Christian Converts he writes to, that they loved that blessed Jesus whom they had not seen.

It now remains, that we make some brief Application of the whole.

Is it the Character of all true Christians, that they are sincere Lovers of Christ? Is it no Obstruction to their loving him, that they never saw him? And is this one Commendation of their Love? Then,

I. We may hence see, how few there are among professed Christians that have this Evidence of Relation to Christ, that they are sincere Lovers of him.

How many Thousands are to be found in the Communion of the Christian Church that want this Character of true Christians! How few are there that entertain such honourable Thoughts of Christ as are suitable to the Dignity of his Person, and the Excellency of his Undertaking! How few do earnestly desire any saving Interest in him, or are, in good earnest, concern'd to secure it! How few do indeed value a special Alliance to him, above all the World! How few carry about any affecting and grateful Sense of their unconceivable Obligations to him! How few have their Hearts inflam'd with any cordial Zeal for his Glory and Service!

Many would pretend to love such a Saviour as would deliver them from the Wrath to come; but how few love such a one as comes to save them from their Sins themselves! Many do pretend some slight and superficial Affection to Christ, but they love the World better. Christ may have their Knee, but the World has their Hearts. Many pretend to love him, but they wofully fail in giving him that solid Proof of it, a sincere Obedience to his Commands. Their pretended Love to him produces no difficult and self-denying, no costly and expensive Services to his Interest, no Fruits of beneficent Love to his indigent Members, that bear any tolerable Proportion to their real Abilities. All these are plainly destitute of that excellent Character in my Text, by which the Disciples of Christ should be distinguish'd and known, viz. Their unfeigned, and superlative, and fruitful Love to an unseen Saviour.

II. I would hence speak something for the Reproof of such in whom this Character is not found.

To be destitute of the Love of Christ, argues your Temper to be vile and base, and your State to be extremely dangerous.

1. It argues your Temper to be vile and base.

How stupid must those Minds be that are possess'd with no affectionate Veneration for so glorious a Person as the incarnate Son of God, coming on so excellent a Design as that of recovering our lapsed Nature! How obdurate must those Hearts be, that are unaffected with all the marvellous Demonstrations of his infinite Love, and feel nothing of the attractive Power of it! What greater Proof could he have given us of his unparallel'd Pity! What could he have done more to deserve our highest and best Affections! And how monstrous Ingratitude does it argue not to love him that has done and suffer'd so much to endear him to our Hearts! Can we behold him assuming our Nature, and coming to us as the Messenger of the Father, with the most welcome Tidings of Reconciliation and Peace that were ever sent

sent from Heaven to this guilty World! Can we see him substituting himself in our Place and Stead, bearing our Sins in his own Body, bleeding and dying for us, and giving his own invaluable Life as a Ransom for ours? Can we consider him as knocking at the Door of our Hearts, and tending to us Pardon and Peace, Life and Salvation, as the Purchase of his Blood for us, and not love him? O how insensible must those Hearts be, that are Proof against such irresistible Charms of divine Love as these?

2. Nay, it argues your State to be extremely dangerous.

To convince you thereof, I need only remind you of that awful Passage of the Apostle already cited, *If any Man love not our Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema, Maranatha.* The Words refer to the two higher Degrees of Excommunication that the Jews were wont to pass on the most heinous and obdurate Offenders, whom the first Degree had been ineffectual to reclaim. *If any Man love not the Lord Jesus, let him be Anathema*, i. e. Let him be as one utterly excluded from the Favour of God, and the Communion of his People; let him be regarded as one under his Displeasure and Curse, devoted to Destruction. *Maranatha*, q. d. Let him know, that the Lord will come to take severe Vengeance on such as are wretchedly disaffected to him; and as they now shut him out of their Hearts, will for ever shut them out of his heavenly Kingdom. He will come to destroy those his Enemies that would not have him to reign over them.

III. Let me then hence urge you to love an unseen Saviour.

Let the Dignity of his Person recommend him to your highest Esteem. Let the Excellency of his glorious Undertaking endear him. Let his transcendent and unparalleled Love inflame your Affections, that your grateful Love may bear some Proportion to his innumerable and valuable Benefits. Love him for those Treasures of divine Wisdom that are hid in him, and for that heavenly Light which he came to communicate to a dark and benighted World. Love him for that eternal Redemption that he has obtain'd at the Expence of his own precious Blood. Love him for that Fulness of Grace that dwells in him as the Head, to be imparted and deriv'd to all the Members of his mystical Body. Love him that has not only enobled your Nature, by assuming it into such a near Union to the Divine, but has enobled you, by advancing you to the Dignity and Privileges of the Sons of God. Love him for that glorious heavenly Inheritance he has entitl'd you to, and will, e'er long, bring you to the final and indefeazable Possession of. O carry about a deep and lasting Sense of your infinite Obligations to him. O value an Interest in him above all the World. Breathe after nearer Conformity to him, and fuller Communion with him. Esteem your Relation to him as your highest Honour, and your Interest in him as your highest Happiness. Rejoyce that he is yours, and you are his. Let your Love to him be entire and superlative, giving him the Sovereignty in your Affections. Let the Sincerity of it appear in your affectionate Concern for his Interest and Glory, and your chearful Obedience to his Commands, and your fruitful beneficent Love to all that love him in Sincerity.

That you may thus love him,

1. Keep up the lively Exercise of Faith, that his being unseen may not be an Hindrance and Obstruction to your Love. If Christ dwells much in our Hearts by Faith, we shall be no Strangers to the Exercise of Love. Consider what was before suggested concerning the clear Evidence we have of the Truth of what the Gospel relates concerning him. Consider how much this is confirm'd by that Testimony you have in your selves, even your inward Experience and Sensation of the happy Effects of his saving Power. And he that has begun, will finish the great Work of your Salvation. What tho' you enjoy not his bodily Presence, when you do enjoy what is more valuable, his spiritual Presence,

even the Communications of that Holy Spirit that is sent to dwell with you for ever! What tho' he is invisible to your bodily Eyes, you may realize him to your Faith, as him that was dead and is alive, and lives for evermore, and has the Keys of the unseen World and of Death, Rev. i. 18. He is now visible to all the blessed Attendants on the heavenly Court, and will, e'er long, visibly appear to compleat the Salvation of his chosen.

2. Let us often think how we shall love that blessed Saviour when we shall actually see him, and how glorify'd Saints do now love him.

Were we in the immediate Presence of Christ; were we admitted to personal Converse with him, in all the Glory of his exalted State; were we with Paul wrapt up into the third Heavens, and into the Paradise of God, and were there present with him whom our Souls love; O what Ardors and Transports of devout Affection would such a Sight raise in us! With what Eagerness should we, as it were, rush into the Embraces of that compassionate Lover and Saviour of Souls! How would our Hearts burn within us! How would the ravishing Sight fill our Minds with Joy, and our Mouths with Praise! And shall we now content our selves with so rare and unaffecting Thoughts of him, so languid Affections to him, so slender and heartless Acknowledgments? Do his redeemed and glorified Members above love him no better? Do they feel no greater Warmth of devout Affection towards him? O let their Example reproach and shame us; let us now love him, as those that hope, e'er long, to be for ever present with him.

3. Let us study to comprehend more the vast Dimensions of his Love.

There is a Breadth and Length, and Height and Depth in it, that surpasses our Knowledge. But frequent and lively Contemplation would discover more and more of his infinite Amiability and boundless Love to attract our Hearts unto him.

Let us fix our Eyes on his Love, as it was display'd in the Depth of his Abasement and Humiliation.

And sure we cannot trace him to the Garden, and there behold his amazing Agonies of Soul, and his bloody Sweat. We cannot follow him to the High-Priest's Hall, and there see him bearing the unjust Sentence that condemn'd him, and the cruel Outrages and Scorn that were offer'd to him with unmov'd Patience; we cannot follow him to the Cross, and there see him made the seeming Triumph of Devils and wicked Men: But especially we cannot there behold him pouring out his Soul unto Death, bearing our Iniquities in his own Body, wounded for our Transgressions, and bruised for our Iniquities, expiating our Guilt with his own Blood, and freely dying to recover us to the Hope of eternal Life; but we must see such an astonishing Scene of unparalleled Love as is capable to conquer and win our Hearts, and to inflame them with the highest Ardors of grateful Affection.

Again, If we behold his Love, as discover'd to us in his State of Exaltation.

If we contemplate him as always appearing in the divine Presence for us, as making perpetual Intercession for all that come to God by him, as employing his royal Power to carry on and perfect the great Work of our Salvation, as sending his Spirit to abide in our Hearts, and his Angels as ministring Spirits to minister to us, as preparing Mansions of Light and Glory for us, and standing with Crowns in his Hand, to place on the Heads of his persevering Followers: We cannot, I say, contemplate these marvellous Effects of his boundless Love to such undeserving Creatures as we are; but we must love him tho' unseen. For tho' himself be invisible, these are glorious and infinitely beneficial Effects of his Power and Love that should for ever endear him to us.

4. Let us consider, That our Love is the best and almost only Return we can make him.

Our best Services and highest Praises can make no Addition to the Glory and Happiness of his divine Nature. And since ardent Love is the highest Tribute we can pay him, our Ingratitude would be most inexcusable

cusable if we should refuse him that. Nay, so marvellous is his Condescension, that he claims our Love that it may render us more *capable* and *meet* Objects of his own *beneficent Love*. Our sincere Love to him is the most satisfying Evidence of our real Interest in him,

and is the best *Preparative* for that State where we hope to be receiv'd into his everlasting Embraces. If we love him tho' unseen, we shall, e'er long, see him, and be imparadis'd in the Bosom of his infinite Love.

S E R M O N XXX.

On the Love of G O D, in sending his S O N to be our Propitiation.

I JOHN IV. 10.

Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. —



THE Love of God manifested to us in his own Son (that invaluable Gift, that unimitable *Mirrou* of divine Love) is a Subject of that unspeakable Importance and Weight, as to deserve our most frequent and attentive Contemplation.

We should not content our selves with a few slight and superficial Thoughts of it, but suffer our Minds to dwell upon it till we feel the sweet and irresistible Constraints of divine Love. The whole of practical Religion (as I have shewn) consists in *loving the Lord our God with all our Heart, and Soul, and Strength, and Mind, and in loving our Neighbour as our selves*; and there is no Motive more powerful to kindle that holy Flame in our Breasts, than our believing Meditations on the Love of God, as display'd in this transcendent and marvellous Instance of it.

All the Perfections of the divine Nature are in themselves equal, because they are all *boundless* and *infinite*, yet they are not represented with equal Lustre in every Act of his Providence and Government over this World. His Attributes with respect to their Exercise and Effects (like the Stars in the Firmament) *shine with a different Glory*. In the Creation it self, some Parts of it bear more eminently the Signature and Stamp of the Power, others of the Wisdom, others of the Goodness of God. And thus in the great Work of Redemption, tho' all the Perfections of God as Governour of fallen Man concur with admirable Harmony, yet this amiable Attribute of divine Love shines in that Dispensation with the most bright and majestick Rays. In this blessed Work, God has indeed conspicuously display'd his manifold Wisdom, his tremendous Justice, his Almighty Power, his unchangeable Faithfulness and Truth; but it does above all most illustriously appear in this Transaction, *That God is Love*. So that the inspir'd Apostle might well set this peculiar Remark upon it, *Herein is Love*, &c. i. e. Herein is the most amiable Discovery; here is the most unparallel'd Instance and convincing Proof of the Love of God, *That when we loved not God, he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins*.

The Apostle had at v. 8. told us, *He that loveth not, knows not God, for God is Love*. Hereby intimating, that all practical Knowledge of God, who in the Gospel has so clearly represented himself as boundless Love,

would transform us into an amiable Resemblance of him in god-like Love. And to convince us, that God is Love, the Apostle appeals to that clear Manifestation he has made thereof, *in sending his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him*. And so full were his Thoughts of this pleasing and affecting Subject, so warm a Sense of it had he upon his own Heart, that he repeats and further illustrates this admirable Instance of divine Love, in the Words I have read.

The Subject then of our present Meditations lies plain before us in the Text, viz.

That herein the blessed God has given us the most convincing Proof, and the highest Instance of his Love, viz. In so loving us, when we loved not him, as to send his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

In speaking hereto, I shall,

First, Consider, *What Love of God the Apostle here speaks of.*

Secondly, I shall take notice of what the Text suggests, to illustrate and set off the Greatness of divine Love in this most astonishing and glorious Instance of it; *The sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.*

And lastly, I shall apply the whole.

First, Let us consider, *What Love of God the Apostle here speaks of.*

And here that obvious Distinction between God's Love of *Pity* and *Good-will*, and that of his *Complacency* or *Delight* must be made use of.

'Tis not God's Love of *Complacency* and *Delight* the Apostle is here speaking of. None are capable Objects of that, but such on whom his amiable holy Image is re-instamp'd by his renewing Grace. *He is a God that has no Pleasure in Wickedness, neither shall Evil dwell with him; The Foolish shall not stand in his Sight, He hates all the Workers of Iniquity*, Psal. v. 4, 5. We were all of us, while dead in *Trespases and Sins*, Children of *Wrath* as well as others, Eph. ii. 3. And the same Person cannot be at once an *Enemy* and yet a *Favourite*: And therefore the Apostle tells us, this Love of God was extended to us when we loved not him, i. e. When our Hearts were devoid of all filial ingenuous Affection towards him, and on the contrary possess'd with a most unreasonable perverse Enmity against him. And it were absolutely inconsistent with the Purity and Holiness of his Nature to suppose, that in this state of Enmity

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ty we should be the *Objects* of his *Approbation* and *Delight*.

The Words must then be understood of God's Love, of *Compassion* and *Good-will*.

And this Love of *Pity* towards us, is reconcileable with the *Purity* and *Justice* of his Nature. The blessed God may look with a compassionate Eye on his *Creatures*, as they are the *Works* of his own *Hands*, while he regards them with a displeased Eye, consider'd as *perverse Enemies* and *ungrateful Rebels* against him.

And accordingly his *Pity* may put him on contriving a way of reducing such *Rebels* to a State of voluntary *Subjection*, that they may become again capable *Objects* of his *Favour* and delightful *Affection*. He may even while he abhors and detests their *unnatural Defection* from him, yet resent the *extreme Misery* they are thereby in *Danger* of being abandon'd to; and his *Bowels* may so tenderly yearn over them, as to excite him to devise means to bring home his *Banished*. He may be willing to be reconciled to his offending *Subjects*, on such *Terms* as are consistent with the *Honour* of his *Government*; and this gracious *Propension* of his Nature may engage his *Wisdom* to find out some effectual *Expedient* to secure his own *Honour*, and yet save his lost and perishing *Creatures*; and it may prompt him upon such a *Salvo* to the *Honour* of his *Law* and *Justice*, to offer *Terms* of *Reconciliation* and *Peace* to all that will, through a *Mediator*, penitently return to him. And 'tis this Love of *Benevolence* and *Pity*, that must prepare the Way for our becoming (upon our sincere Conversion to him) the *Objects* of his Love of *Complacency* and *Delight*.

Now 'tis this Love of *Pity* that the *Apostle* here calls us to contemplate, and sets before us the most convincing *Proof*, and the most unparallel'd *Instance* of it.

And this leads me,

Secondly, To take Notice of what the Text suggests, to illustrate and set off the marvellous Greatness of the Love of God, and especially in this Instance of it, his sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.

Now in order hereto, we may distinctly consider,

I. In whose Breast this Love of *Pity* and *Good-will* was entertain'd.

II. To whom it was extended, and under what Character we were then consider'd.

III. What Effect towards us this Love has produc'd; or in what Instance it has display'd itself.

Under these Heads I shall have occasion to consider, what the Text suggests to enhance the Love of God.

And,

I. Let us consider, In whose Breast this Love of *Pity* and *Good-will* was entertain'd.

'Twas a Love entertain'd in the Breast of that great and glorious Majesty, who is infinitely Blessed in himself, and has not the least need of us to preserve and increase his own Felicity. He is the Fountain of most perfect Satisfaction to himself, who can neither receive any Addition to it from our Recovery and Salvation, nor any Diminution from our deserved Ruin. Our Righteousness can no more be any real Gain and Benefit to him, than our multiply'd Transgressions can do him any real Hurt and Mischief, Job xxxv. 6, 7. His Love to us does not therefore arise from any Indigency or Want of us, but from the All-sufficiency and over-flowing Fulness of his own gracious Nature. 'Tis a pure and liberal Affection without any other Motive than what his own Bowels suggest. Nay, 'tis a Love entertain'd in the Breast of an injur'd and provok'd Sovereign, who had all possible Advantage given him to glorify his Justice in our deserved Destruction; and who has for any thing we know, in those immense Regions above us, innumerable intellectual Beings to be the perpetual Monuments of his Goodness, and Instruments of his Praise; though we had been all left to become the Examples of his just Severity. Of which more may occur under the next Head.

II. Let us farther consider, To whom God has extended his Love, and under what Character we were con-

sider'd when he gave us this marvellous Proof of it.

Herein is Love, that God loved us, when we loved not him.

If indeed we only consider'd our own Rank among God's reasonable Creatures, it ought to enhance his Love in our Esteem, that 'tis extended to us who are so far below his Notice and Consideration. What are we but despicable Worms, so many Clods of animated Dust, Creatures who dwell in Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the Dust, Job iv. 19. And if all the Nations of the Earth be in the sight of God but as the Drop of the Bucket, and small Dust of the Ballance, how great is his Condescension that sets his Heart upon such Nothing and Vanity as we are? Isa. xl. 15, 16, &c. Especially when we lift up our Eyes to those spacious Heavens above us, and consider how innumerable noble intellectual Beings do probably inhabit them; we may well say, What is Man, O Lord, that thou art mindful of him, or the Son of Man that thou visitest him? Psal. viii. 4. And accordingly we may justly resent it as an Instance of great Goodness and Condescension, that the sovereign Majesty of Heaven, the Father of Spirits, that has so innumerable Spirits of higher Rank and Order to minister to him, should own a Relation to, and exercise his merciful Care over these Spirits of our's that dwell in Flesh, and which consequently seem to be of the lowest Order of intellectual Beings. And yet he disdains not to be call'd, The God of the Spirits of all Flesh, nor are they excluded from his Care and Love.

But we must here especially consider, in order to our illustrating the Greatness of the Love of God, our present State and Condition in which his Eye beheld us, when his Bowels of Pity yearn'd over us, and the Temper and Disposition we bare towards him.

I. As to our State and Condition, we were consider'd as guilty Offenders, obnoxious to his vindictive Justice.

And indeed otherwise we had needed none to interpose for us to become our Propitiation. We were the Transgressors of God's Holy Law, chargeable with numberless Violations of it, and on the Account thereof, under the Curse of the Law, bound over unto Everlasting Death, the deserved Wages of Sin. We were such therefore as an incens'd Majesty had a just Right to punish; nay, such as the Honour of his Justice seem'd concern'd to pursue; and in whose Perdition he might have glorify'd himself for ever.

His Love was therefore extended to us when most unworthy of it; nay, when most deserving of his just Severity.

And how marvellous Love was it, that has thus overlook'd all our provoking Guilt, and magnify'd it self on all our Unworthiness and Mis-deserts! That there should be Propensions to pity in his Heart towards us, when we could expect nothing but fiery Indignation from him! That instead of unsheathing the Sword of his Justice, to cut off such perverse Rebels, he should form the Project of reconciling us to himself! That while we stood before him as condemned Criminals before their injur'd Sovereign, his paternal Affections should be mov'd towards us, and Mercy should rejoyce against Judgment in his royal Breast! O how does this tend to exalt the Glory of divine Mercy and Love, and to render it most illustrious in our Eyes! O marvellous Love of God, extended to those that were not only undeserving of the least of his Mercies, but had rendered themselves fit Fuel for the Flames of his Vengeance! That has deriv'd Arguments of Pity from our self-procured Misery, and is now become the Refuge, not only of forlorn and miserable, but of sinful and guilty Creatures. So matchless is this Love of God, that the inspir'd Pen-Men seem to have set apart the Name of Grace to represent it. The same Favour is far greater in moral Consideration and Value, when bestow'd on an Enemy, than when confer'd on a Friend. And the more absolutely undeserv'd such a Favour is, the more should it enhance and indear the Affection that bestows it. How great, how infinitely tender

then was the Affection of a gracious God, who found us his *Enemies* at his Feet, and in his Power, and yet instead of stretching forth his Hand to *destroy* us, has extended it to *recover* and *save* us?

But farther,

2. As to our *Temper* and *Disposition*, *We loved not him, when he loved us.*

There was therefore no *Motive* or *Attractive* to his Love on our part, but the contrary. His Love has entirely *prevented* our's, being entertain'd in his merciful Breast, before any penitent Sense of our Guilt, or any ingenuous Remorse for it, or any Inclination to return to our offended Father appear'd in our's. Though the *Breach* begun wholly on our Part, yet the *Project* of *Reconciliation* begun entirely on his. O infinite Love that has not only prevented our *Deserts*, but even our *Expectations* and *Desires*! O tender Bowels of Pity that thus yearned in the blessed God towards us, whose Hearts were most unjustly alienated from him! Had we indeed upon the first Reflection on our unnatural Defection from him, cast our selves in deep Self-abasement at his Feet, lamented our Sins with penitential Tears; had we in such a relenting Frame sued to him for Mercy, and return'd to our incens'd Father with the dutiful Affection of Children; this might have render'd our *Case* the more *pitiable*. But alas! there was no such ingenuous Temper and Carriage on our Part, to recommend us to the Mercy of God; but on the contrary, that most unreasonable Disinclination towards him, that might justly provoke him to abhor us. So every way *free* was the Love of God without any Consideration in us to excite it: And no wonder indeed that it should prevent ours, when it had its *Rise* and *Date* (if I may so speak) in the eternal Counsels of God; when at the same time that his omniscient Eye foresaw the *Misery* of our *fallen State*, his Wisdom and Mercy form'd the Design of our *Redemption* from it: And therefore we read of Christ's being the *Lamb of God slain* (in the divine Counsel and Purpose) *from before the Foundation of the World*, Rev. xiii. 8.

Nay, the Love of God is *enhanc'd* the more, when among other Creatures involv'd in Guilt and Ruin, as well as our selves; he does by an Act of *distinguishing Favour* select us to be the Objects of his Mercy. How much nobler Creatures were the *fallen Angels*! How much more capable of glorifying God in the Use of their most excellent Powers! Yet they are remedilessly cast down from their first Habitation; they are *reserv'd* unto Chains of *Darkness* against the Judgment of the great Day. There appears no such Concern for the Recovery of those once glorious Spirits. There is no powerful Hand of divine Mercy stretch'd out to lay hold on their sinking Nature, and to prevent their falling into endless Perdition. But while they are left in the Hands of inexorable Justice, we (that are by Nature so far beneath them) are regarded with a compassionate Eye. Towards us an offended God entertains Thoughts of Peace; the Extremity of our Danger excites his sovereign Pity to appear for our Relief, and prompts him to send a powerful Redeemer to seek and save us in our lost Condition. But that leads me,

III. To consider, what *Effect* this Love of God has produc'd, or in what remarkable *Instance* it was display'd. And the Text tells us, it was most eminently shewn, *In sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.*

And here every thing concurs to enhance and exalt the Love of God, and excite our magnifying Thoughts of it.

Let us then distinctly consider, the *Person* he sent, the *Errand* he sent him on, the *Benefits* that thence redound to us, and all concur to set off the Greatness of his transcendent Love.

1. For the *Person* sent, it was his Son.

Now as Christ is the Son of God, both in respect of his divine and human Nature, so this glorious Constitution of his *Person*, is it self a marvellous *Instance* of divine Love. That the only begotten Son of God (as he is call'd

in the Verse before) should become the Son of Man, that the eternal Word should be made *Flesh*, especially that he should assume our Nature with a Design of becoming our *Propitiation* by his Sufferings in it; this is the most astonishing Condescension that ever was express'd; and in this, we may behold an *Height* and *Depth* of divine Love, far surpassing our Knowledge. The Condescension of divine Mercy is herein so great and unusual, that some have made this an *Objection* against our Belief of it. But sure such have wrong Notions of the divine Majesty and Greatness, who think it unworthy of so glorious a Being, to stoop so low for the Relief and Recovery of his perishing Creatures. 'Tis rather a most congruous Expression of his boundless Love, to use such marvellous Condescension in order to the saving the meanest of his reasonable Creatures, since Greatness and Goodness never appear with so amiable a Lustre, as when they are found in the nearest Conjunction.

If we consider our Lord Jesus as Man; so he was on account of his *miraculous Conception*, the Son of God. And he has that Title also on the Account of all those god-like and amiable Qualities, that render'd him the brightest Image of the Invisible God. And much more does that Title belong to him, on the account of his sacred *Union* to the Offices of Prophet, Priest and King. And accordingly 'tis justly observ'd, that to be the Christ (or the Anointed) and to be the Son of God, are often us'd as synonymous Expressions in the New Testament. See Matt. xvi. 16. compar'd with Mark viii. 27. Matt. xxvi. 63. And Christ, even consider'd as Man, was most dear unto God; he was his well-beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased. (As himself testify'd by a Voice from Heaven, Matt. iii. uic.)

The Dignity then of the Person sent, is a glorious Display of divine Love, and indeed such as we durst never have imagin'd, had it not been reveal'd. What is it for the highest Angel to assume the Nature of the meanest Worm. The Distance is only *Finite*, but here 'tis Boundless and Infinite. The Nature of Angels themselves is at as great a distance from the Divine, as Finite and Infinite. Man is far inferior to Angels; and yet the Son of God took not on him the Nature of Angels, but the Seed of Abraham, Heb. ii. 16. But,

2. We must here consider the Errand on which God sent his own Son, viz. To be the Propitiation for our Sins.

The Expression carries a plain Allusion to those expiatory Sacrifices then us'd both by Jews and Gentiles, in which the Offender's Guilt was suppos'd to be taken away by the Life of the Beast being given in lieu of his, and the offended Deity to be thereby appeas'd and render'd propitious and favourable. Now both the holy Scriptures assure us, and our own Reason it self declares to us, that those Sacrifices could never expiate the real Guilt of Sin, by making any Compensation to the injur'd Justice of God. There is nothing in the Blood or Life of a Beast, that should render it a valuable Consideration for the Life of a Man. And this put the Heathens often, in case of extraordinary Guilt, on making use of human Sacrifices, as reckoning them more valuable, and capable to propitiate their offended Deities. Hence we may observe, the Prophet brings in the distressed Sinner, as proposing (lest other Sacrifices should fail) to give his first-born for his Transgression, and the Fruit of his Body for the Sin of his Soul, Micah vi. 6, 7, &c.

Now that God who had so long requir'd those Expiatory Sacrifices, both before and under the Law, to preserve in the World the Belief and Sense of his punishing Justice, was pleas'd in the Fulness of Time to send his own Son to offer such a Sacrifice, as was every way capable to declare his Righteousness to the guilty World, and to render our Pardon manifestly consistent with the Glory of it; such a Sacrifice as by entirely expiating the Guilt of Sin, should supersede all those legal Sacrifices that were only the Types and Figures of this; such a Sacrifice as was a most valuable Consideration for our Impunity and Forgiveness.

And in order to the Son of God's becoming such a Propitiation or expiatory Sacrifice; it was requisite, that

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that he should substitute himself in our Place and Stead; that our Iniquities should be laid on him, and he undergo a vicarious Punishment, his Life being given as the Ransom for our's. It was requisite, that he should endure all those Sufferings in his sacred Body, and all those Agonies in his innocent Soul, that were fit to manifest the heinous Demerit of Sin, and the just Indignation of an incens'd God against it. He was oblig'd in order hereto, to bear the Pain and Shame of the Cross, there making his Soul an Offering for Sin, and shedding his precious Blood to obtain the Remission of it. Such an expiatory Sacrifice the Justice of God demanded, for the Reparation of its injur'd Honour. And such a costly Sin-offering was the Son of God ordain'd to be, by the special Command and Appointment of the Father, 2 Cor. v. 5. ult.

Now this was a most convincing Proof, and unparalleled Instance of the Father's Love.

For herein the Love of God to us seem'd to counteract and control the tender Affection he bare to his own Son. If God said of Abraham, Now I know that thou fearest me, in that thou hast not with-held thy Son, thy only Son from me, Gen. xxii. 12. How much more may we say of him on this occasion, Now we know that thou lovest us, in that thou hast not with-held thy Son, thy only Son from us. His infinite Love could not have bestow'd a more invaluable Gift upon us, than his only begotten Son; and he could not give him to us in a manner more expressive of his matchless Love, than by giving him to be our Sin-offering, and Propitiation. Nay, so transcendent was the Pity of God to us, that in order to his sparing us, he spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32. Nay, his Compassion to us made him as it were turn a deaf Ear to the earnest Request of his own Son, that if possible that Cup might pass from him. And O what an amazing Instance of Love is it, that an offended Majesty should thus give up the Son of his Love, to become an atoning Sacrifice and Propitiation for his Enemies themselves! That our Guilt should by his Appointment be transferr'd on the Head of this Lamb of God, and his inestimable Life be offer'd for the Redemption of our's. That the Prince of Life, and the Lord of Glory, should by his Ordination be expos'd to the Agonies of Death, to the Pain and Shame of the Cross, to save such vile and worthless Wretches from everlasting Contempt and Misery! O how unwilling was he to execute upon us the Punishment due to our Iniquities, when he thus laid them on his own Son! And how intent was he on our Redemption and Salvation, when it pleas'd him to bruise this dearest Object of his Love, that by his Stripes and Wounds we might be healed! This is an Instance of Love, which if it had not been clearly reveal'd, we could never have imagin'd or believ'd, and which when reveal'd we cannot comprehend the Greatness of. 'Tis the Wonder of the holy Angels, and much more should it be marvellous in our Eyes. Once more,

3. Let us consider the Benefits that redound to us from the Son of God's being the Propitiation for our Sins. And this Consideration will further enhance the Love of God in this marvellous Instance of it.

And indeed, as the Love of God could not bestow a greater Gift upon us, nor provide a more costly and invaluable Sacrifice for us, than that of his own Son; so we could not reap more inestimable Benefits, than what that Sacrifice has procur'd. What greater Thing could the Son of God obtain for us, by his offering himself without Spot to the Father, than eternal Redemption? What could the precious Sacrifice of the Lamb of God do more, than take away the Sin of the World? How glorious an Effect was it of his becoming a Curse for us, that he has redeem'd us from the Curse of the Law? How excellent a Fruit is it of his being the Propitiation for our Sins; that he is now our powerful Advocate with the Father, and able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, since he ever lives to make Intercession for us? What greater and nobler Effects could his Sacrifice produce, than

the Vindication of God's injur'd Law and Justice; the removing all those Obstacles that his Justice laid in the way of his Mercy, and opening to us all the Treasure of Grace and Glory, obtaining for us all the Blessings of the everlasting Covenant? For the Apostle justly reasons in this Case, He that spared not his own Son, but freely gave him up for us all; How much more will he not with him freely give us all Things? And we may well suppose that the Designs of his Love to us, must be glorious and great; when they were to be brought about by so astonishing and costly Means, as the extream Sufferings and Death of his own Son. The Blessings he intended to bestow must be invaluable indeed, when such a Price as the Blood of his own Son must be paid to obtain them.

And O how transcendent is the Love of God that carries on so merciful Intentions towards us, that has such a Salvation to bestow upon us, as so valuable a Consideration must be offer'd to procure? How does his Love in the Breadth of it (in its extensive Fruits) and in the Length of it (the endless Duration of the Blessings he bestows) transcend all our Thoughts and Comprehension!

All the Use I shall at present suggest of the foregoing Discourse, is to call you to more frequent Contemplation of the Love of God, especially in this transcendent Instance of it.

And this is an Exercise very suitable for those of us, that have so lately beheld the lively Representation of it.

We should be far from confining our Thoughts of it to that holy Ordinance we have attended upon. That Love will be (we hope) the Subject of our everlasting Praises. And sure it should now have a considerable share in our delightful Meditations. Especially in our's, that claim an Interest in that propitiatory Sacrifice which the Son of God was sent to offer, and hope to partake of all the inestimable Fruits of it?

What were we once but Enemies and Rebels, alienated from God, and destitute of any filial Dispositions towards him, obnoxious to his Justice, under his righteous Curse, and liable every Moment to the Execution of it?

But now, we that were afar off, are brought nigh. We that were Enemies by wicked Works, are now reconcil'd. We that were guilty Criminals, are now adopted Children. And we that were Heirs of Hell, are now made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life.

And this blessed Change is brought about by so amazing a Transaction, as God's sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. He was charg'd with our Guilt, in order to our merciful Absolution and Discharge. On him our Iniquities were laid, that they might not be imputed to us. On him was the Chastisement of our Peace, that through his Stripes we might be heal'd. Against him was the Sword of Vindictive Justice turn'd, which wounded him for our Transgressions, that pardoning Mercy might stream to us through his bleeding Wounds.

And the Love of God was the Spring of this astonishing gracious Dispensation. To that we owe the first Contrivance of this glorious Design. To that we must ascribe it, that the Son of God came upon that compassionate Undertaking and Errand. He came in his Sufferings and Sacrifice to accomplish the great Purposes of divine Wisdom and Grace. For our Lord Jesus came not to make any Change in the divine Nature, but only to make a Change in the Case and State of fallen Man, by offering to the Justice of God a valuable Consideration for our Impunity and Salvation. And 'twas in compliance with the Father's Will, and in pursuance of his compassionate Design, that he became our propitiatory Sin-offering. His Love therefore must be chiefly ey'd and ador'd by us, as the Fountain and Source of all these glorious Transactions, in order to our Redemption and Salvation. Sure then the Love of God deserves our most frequent and attentive Contemplation here, which we hope to reap the blessed Fruits of, to all Eternity.

S E R M O N XXXI.

On the Love of G O D, in sending his S O N to be
our Propitiation.

I JOHN IV. 10.

Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. —

L Have in a former Discourse on these Words, treated on the excellent Subject contain'd in them, viz. *That 'tis a transcendent and unparallel'd Instance of Love, that when we lov'd not God, he lov'd us, and sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.*

In speaking thereto, I

First, Consider'd this Love of God, and shew'd 'tis to be understood of his Love of Compassion and Good-will, not of his Love of Complacency and Delight, being extended to us *when we lov'd not him.* I then,

Secondly, Consider'd what the Text suggests to enhance this Love of God, and to represent it as great and unparallel'd.

To that purpose I consider'd,

I. In *whose* Breast it was entertain'd, viz. In that of the blessed God, who has no need of us, and can receive no Benefit from us; nay, who was highly provok'd and injur'd by us.

II. To *whom* this Love was extended, and under what Character we were consider'd.

It was extended to us, who were *below* the divine Notice as *despicable Creatures*, *unworthy* of his favourable Regard as being *perverse Enemies* and *Rebels*, and such as needed an expiatory Sacrifice. It was extended for our Relief when the fallen Angels were past by, and abandoned to remediless irrecoverable Ruin.

It was extended to us, *when we loved not him*; and consequently when there was no Motive to his Pity on our part. But on the contrary, every Thing that might expose us to his just Abhorrence and vindictive Wrath.

III. I consider'd this Instance, wherein the Love of God displayed it self, *The sending his Son*, &c.

And here I consider'd the Dignity of the Person sent, his Son, his *only begotten Son* (as he is called in the foregoing Verse) *The Errand* he was sent upon, viz. *To be the Propitiation for our Sins*, which includes his Substitution of himself in our Place and Stead, and all the stupendious Sufferings he under-went, in order to expiate the Guilt of Sin, by the most awful Declaration of God's vindictive Justice against it. And lastly, the unspeakable *Benefits* that redound to us from his thus becoming *the Propitiation for our Sins*.

All these Considerations concur to enhance the Love of God, and to represent it as transcendent and unparallel'd.

I now proceed to make some practical Improvement

and Application of this important Subject: And,

I. We may for our Instruction here infer, that this Love of God being extended to us *when we loved not him*, is every way consistent with his Son's being *the Propitiation* (or expiatory Sacrifice) *for our Sins*.

This I the rather take Notice of, because it shews the *Weakness* and *Vanity* of that *Objection* (or rather *Cavil*) which the Patrons of the Socinian Cause advance against the *Satisfaction of Christ*, viz. That 'tis inconsistent with the Declarations which the blessed God so frequently makes of his Love to *sinful Mankind*.

For (say they) "If the Scriptures testify, That God so loved us, even when consider'd as *Sinners* and *Enemies*, what need was there of any *Satisfaction* to his *Justice*, of any proper expiatory Sacrifice to appease his Wrath, and restore us to his Favour? Since he was inclineable to pity and forgive; What needed there more than our sincere *Repentance* to make us capable Objects of his *Pardon* and *Acceptance*? How could we be at once the Objects of his *Anger* and *Love*? And since we were the Objects of his Love already, what occasion was there of any *Compensation* to his Justice to render us so?"

Answer. This *Objection* plainly arises from their not duly distinguishing between God's Love of *Compassion* and *Pity*, and that of his *Approbation* and *Delight*. Now the same Person may be at once the Object of his *Pity*, and yet the Object of his just *Displeasure*. The Consistency of these two different Affections is very obvious in human Government. A *gracious Prince* may compassionate a *rebellious Subject*, who yet stands condemned by the *Law of the Land* for his Crimes, and is obnoxious to publick Justice. And there may be a Struggle in his Breast between his Regard to the Honour of the Law, his Concern to maintain his Authority, and to deter others from the like Crimes, and his Pity to this or that particular Offender. His Pity to an *obnoxious Criminal*, may incline him to pardon and restore him to Favour; and yet his Concern for the Honour and Safety of his own Government, may render him unwilling to do it without some *Expedient*, some *valuable Consideration* that may vindicate his Authority from Contempt. The known Instance of *Zaleucus* is pertinently enough alledg'd to this purpose; who having by a Law made *Adultery* punishable with the Loss of both the Offender's Eyes, and his own Son being found guilty; he had so great a Regard to the Law, that he would not wholly remit the Punishment; and yet he had that Pity to his Son, that he put out only one of his

his Eyes, and in lieu of the other, put out one of his own, that none of his Subjects might, from this Instance of Clemency, hope for Impunity. Here was Justice temper'd with Clemency and Pity. There is something parallel hereto in the divine Government, and this amazing Transaction of it. The guilty Race of Mankind are fallen under the righteous Curse of God's Holy Law. Justice demands the Execution of the Sentence. The Bowels of divine Pity yearn over the miserable Case of the guilty Offenders, and render him inclineable to pardon them upon any Terms consistent with the Honour of his injur'd Justice. But his Concern to maintain the Reputation of his Law, to keep up the Reverence of his Authority, and to deter all other his intelligent Creatures from the like Disobedience, render him averse thereto, without some such publick Display of his just Severity against the Sins of Men, as may answer these Ends of his wise and holy Government. His Wisdom finds out such an Expedient for the publick Declaration of his vindictive Justice in the Sufferings of his own Son, voluntarily substituting himself in the Place of guilty Sinners, and becoming their Sin-offering and Propitiation. And his Mercy inclines him to accept of this valuable Consideration for our Impunity. His tender Propension to pity and spare us, inclines him not to spare his own Son, but freely to deliver him up for us all, Rom. viii. 32. His Justice insists upon, and accepts a Sacrifice of infinite Value, as an Atonement for us; and his Mercy prompts him to provide that Sacrifice for us, when we could provide none for our selves. That such a costly Sacrifice as the Son of God should be offer'd, in order to our Remission, is owing to the Demands that Justice made for the Reparation of its injur'd Honour; that he should be sent on this compassionate Errand of becoming our Propitiation, we entirely owe it to the transcendent Love and Pity of a compassionate, tho' offended Father. So that a Satisfaction to divine Justice was so far from being inconsistent with his Love, that the former was necessary to accomplish and bring about the merciful Designs of the latter. And tho' Justice requir'd such a Satisfaction, yet it was infinite Love that provided it for us.

But farther,

II. This Instance of the marvellous Love of God, in sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins, should establish and confirm our Belief of God's vindictive Justice.

For had not the vindictive Justice of God laid a strong Bar in the Way of our Pardon and Forgiveness, there had been no need of so costly a Means of obtaining it as the Son of God's becoming the Propitiation for our Sins. The Affection which our heavenly Father bears to him who is called his only begotten, his dear, his well-beloved Son, would have sufficiently dissuaded him from exposing this Object of his highest Love to such a Scene of amazing Sufferings, if they had been no way needful to expiate the Guilt of Sin, and to render the Forgiveness of it consistent with the Honour of his Justice and Government. We may then, from this most unparallel'd Transaction, not only infer, that God is Love, but that he is a Being of spotless Purity and Righteousness too. That he is just even when he is the gracious Justifier of those that believe in his incarnate Son, and embrace the Offers of divine Mercy thro' him. We must not then overlook this awful Declaration that God has made of his Righteousness to the guilty World, but get our Minds deeply possess'd with the most lively Apprehensions of it, Rom. iii. 25, 26. We must regard punitive Justice as an essential Perfection of the divine Nature. But then by vindictive Justice, we do not mean (as many Socinian Writers wretchedly misrepresent the Matter) a Desire of Revenge in God, consider'd as merely the injur'd Party, and a Delight in the Sufferings of the Offender, as a Gratification of that Desire of Revenge. Far be it from us to entertain such unworthy Apprehensions of that infinitely gracious and perfect Being. But we mean God's Inclination to manifest his Hatred of Sin, by the Severity of

its Punishment. His Concern to preserve the Honour of his Laws, and to vindicate his Authority from Contempt, and to discountenance the Violation of his Commands by the Punishment thereof. And of this Inclination the blessed God has given the clearest Demonstration to the World in his refusing to pardon penitent Offenders themselves, without the Interposal of a most costly invaluable Sacrifice for the Expiation of their Guilt; And he will yet give a more terrible Demonstration of it in the remediless Execution of the Sentence of his Law against all the impenitent Rejecters of his offer'd Mercy. O let us then carry a deep Sense and Impression of his Justice as well as Goodness engraven upon our Hearts. Let us consider these two Perfections as equally belonging to the divine Nature, and appearing with an entire Harmony in the Administration of his Government. The highest and most unparallel'd Act of divine Love carries along with it the most awful and matchless Instance of his inflexible and tremendous Justice. He shew'd his Love to us, in giving his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. But,

III. I would hence apply my self to those of you that are devoid of the Love of God, and consequently in a State of Enmity against him, notwithstanding this marvellous Love he has express'd to you, in sending his Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins.

And from this Consideration, I would, if possible, shame you out of your unreasonable Disaffection to him, and invite you to a penitent Return to him, and thankful Acceptance of his offer'd Mercy.

First, I would, if possible, shame you out of your unreasonable Disaffection to God.

'Tis indeed a most monstrous and unnatural Thing, that a reasonable Soul should be under such a wretched Disaffection to the Father of Spirits, whose Offspring it is. That it should be possess'd with a curs'd Enmity to the best and most amiable of all Beings! That it should not love him in whom all those adorable Perfections are found that are the proper Attractives of rational Love! But O how heinous Aggravation of your Guilt is it, not to love him whose Love has so freely prevented yours! Not to love him, that has extended his Love to you when absolutely unworthy of it, and given you the highest Demonstration possible of his tenderest Love, even when you might reasonably have expected and feared the utmost Severity of his Justice! O what a Monster of Ingratitude must thy Soul be, when such astonishing Love can make no genuine Impression upon it! What an obdurate Heart must thine be, that such matchless and surprizing Pity cannot melt into filial Affection towards such an infinitely gracious Father! O blush, O tremble to think, that ever thy base and disingenuous Heart should maintain such an unaccountable Aversion to him, who is drawing thee to himself by such (as one wou'd think) irresistible Cords of Love! O dread to think that his most undeserved Love should meet with no other Requital on thy Part than the most undeserved Enmity! Methinks, the very Consideration of it should fill thee with just Confusion and Self-abhorrence, and should carry into thy Conscience deep Convictions of the desperate Wickedness of thine own Heart, that is thus Proof against the most powerful Incentives of divine Love. What wouldst thou thy self think of an ungrateful Rebel, who is not capable of being won by the most condescending Expressions and Proofs of his Prince's Clemency and Pity (even when he lyes at his Mercy) to be reconciled to him, and lay down his most unreasonable Hostility against him? And yet such, nay, infinitely worse and more inexcusable is thy Temper and Behaviour towards an infinitely gracious God. O pursue these serious Thoughts till thy Heart begin to relent, and till thou feelest some Motions of filial Affection towards such a compassionate Father kindled in thy Breast.

But,

Secondly, I would farther invite all such of you to a penitent Return to God, and thankful Acceptance of his offer'd Mercy.

And

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And this is indeed the genuine Improvement you should make of God's marvellous *Love of Pity*, in sending his Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins.

And to enforce this *Exhortation*, let me beseech you to consider,

1. You stand in infinite Need of that Pardon and Forgiveness which the Son of God has obtain'd, by becoming the Propitiation for your Sins.

You are guilty Offenders, under the Arrest of divine Justice, under the Curse of his Holy Law, and every Moment liable to the Execution of that condemning Sentence it has past upon you. The Avenger of Blood is on his Way, and has you in continual Pursuit. There is but (for any thing you know) a Step between you and everlasting Death. You are only repriev'd from remediless Destruction by the arbitrary Forbearance of God, which he may the next Month, or Week, or Day put an End to, and then your Case is hopeless and desperate for ever: And shall a condemn'd Criminal slight and despise, or shall he dally and trifle with the Offers of that Forgiveness which cost such an inestimable Ransom to obtain?

2. Consider God has therefore sent his Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins, that he might in consistency with the Honour of his own Justice, make such Offers of Mercy to you.

You ought therefore to regard these Proposals of Pardon and Peace to returning Penitents, as the Purchase of the Redeemer's Blood, and the admirable Fruits of divine Pity and Love. The blessed God has been at all this Expence in repairing and vindicating the Honour of his own Justice, that he might without any Stain on the Glory thereof, set on foot this blessed Treaty of Reconciliation and Peace; that he might open a Way for the free Exercise of Mercy, and that his Throne of Grace might be accessible to all penitent Offenders. And therefore to turn a deaf Ear to his Tenders of Mercy, is as much as lies in you to frustrate his compassionate Design, in sending his Son to be your Propitiation, and to render his Sacrifice ineffectual and fruitless. And sure you cannot offer a greater Affront to his Love than this. You cannot more effectually express your prophane Contempt of it, than by slighting the Offers of that Pardon which he has sent his Son to procure by so inestimable a Price as that of his own Blood.

3. Consider what Encouragement you have to return by the fullest Assurance of Pardon upon your accepting the reasonable Terms of it.

For if the Love of God so far extended to you, when you love not him, as to give his own Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins; how freely and readily will he receive you into his Favour, when you, with filial Affection and Remorse, return to him?

And what can reasonably discourage you from doing so?

Is it the Greatness of your Sins? How can that obstruct your Forgiveness upon your serious Repentance, when the Prospect of it did not prevent God's sending his own Son to expiate your Guilt? And he was sent to obtain Salvation even for the Chief of Sinners. His precious Blood can wash away Sins of the deepest Stain and Dye. His Sacrifice can atone even for those heinous Offences for which there was no Sacrifice provided or allowed by the Law of Moses, Acts xiii. 39. And the Offers of divine Grace made on the Account of his propitiatory Sacrifice, exclude none from Forgiveness but such as by wilful Unbelief or Impenitency exclude themselves.

Art thou discouraged from the awful Apprehensions and Dread of the Sin-avenging Justice of God?

'Tis true, that Justice might have quashed all thy Hopes, and driven thee to Despair, if thy Pardon were indeed inconsistent with it. But a gracious God has remov'd this Obstacle, by providing a full Satisfaction to his Justice that has accorded the Interests thereof with those of his Mercy. So that divine Justice has now no Objection to make, no Plea to offer in Bar to the Exercise of his Mercy. Thou mayst justly plead with

thy self, Has the blessed God been at such Expence to reconcile that Exercise of his Mercy to the Penitent with the Honour of his Justice, and will he deny a Share in his Mercy to a contrite relenting Sinner, that humbly and earnestly implores it? Was he so unwilling to exercise his Justice in the deserved Condemnation of Sinners, as to provide so costly a Sin-offering to expiate their Guilt, and will he remedilessly expose those to it, who, with a penitent Heart, flee to his infinite Mercy as their Sanctuary, thro' the Mediation of his Son, whom he himself hath set forth to be a Propitiation through Faith in his Blood? Rom. iii. 25. Will he that spared not his own Son that he might spare us, turn a deaf Ear to the Cries of a returning Prodigal, for that Mercy which he has been at so vast Expence to make way for the free and full Dispensation of?

You have therefore no reason to think that you have to do with an inexorable Enemy whom no Intreaties can move, or with an implacable Sovereign, whose Pity and Favour is not to be gained by the most penitent Submission. Had you any such Plea as this, it would in some Degree lessen the Guilt of your obstinate Continuance in Sin. But your Case is quite contrary. Tho' you have rendred your selves justly vile in the Eyes of God, as perverse Sinners, yet you are not shut out of that Pity that he bears to you as his distressed Creatures. Tho' you have incensed his Justice, he has provided a Sacrifice of Atonement. Tho' you have deserv'd to die, he has sent his own Son to lay down his inestimable Life, as the Ransom of yours. Tho' you are under the condemning Sentence of his Law, he has publish'd a royal Act of Indemnity and Pardon to all that, thro' this blessed Redeemer, come to him. So that if you perish in your unpardon'd Guilt, 'tis because you undervalued that Blood that has obtain'd Forgiveness; 'tis because you spurn at that Mercy that offers it, 'tis because you will not earnestly sue for it, and dutifully comply with the reasonable Terms on which it's offer'd; 'tis because you will not renounce those Sins which a gracious God is so ready to forgive; nor subject your selves to his rightful Authority, who is so willing on that Condition to readmit you to his Favour and Love.

And therefore let me add,

4. Consider, That inexorable Justice will take Place on all who reject God's gracious Offers of Mercy and Forgiveness.

You have already heard, that Justice is as essential a Perfection of the divine Nature as Mercy. And that God's Justice would not admit of the Pardon of the truly penitent, without the Intervention of the Sufferings and Death of his own Son as their Sacrifice and Propitiation. How remedilessly then will all penitent Sinners be expos'd to its avenging Stroke for ever! That Justice that spar'd not the dear Son of God when standing in our Place and Stead, will much less spare the obstinate Transgressors of his holy Law. If these Things were done to the green Tree, what shall be done to the dry? Luke xxiii. 31. To all such hardened Contemners of his Authority, even our God will prove a consuming Fire, Heb. xii. ult. And all such have the greater Reason to expect it, because their perverse Opposition to God's Authority is aggravated by their Contempt of his infinite Mercy. They trample not only on his Sovereignty, but on his Clemency and Love. They spurn at those very Bowels of Pity that yearn over them to prevent their endless Perdition. They offer the highest Affront, not only to the Majesty of God, but to his transcendent Grace, by rejecting the most compassionate Offers that ever the offended Sovereign of Heaven made to his rebellious Creatures. And such as thus scornfully slight the forgiving Mercy of God, will fall the more unpitied Sacrifice to his Justice. If those Coals of Fire, that divine Compassion now heaps on the Heads of Sinners, do not melt them into Repentance, they will the more terribly consume them. None will sink lower into Hell and Damnation, than the obstinate Despisers of Mercy and Salvation.

And O that this were more seriously consider'd by all such as have hitherto turn'd a deaf Ear to all God's

gracious

gracious Overtures of Pardon and Reconciliation! O that all such would in this their Day of Grace mind the Things that belong to their (eternal) Peace before they be (remedilessly) hid from their Eyes! But,

IV. I would hence apply my self to all those of you, who have, by Faith, fled to the Son of God as your Propitiation, and are, upon your penitent Return to God, restored to his Favour.

And to such there are several Advices that my Text does naturally suggest. As,

1. Often contemplate that Love of God that has so far extended to you when you lov'd not him, as to send his Son to be the Propitiation for your Sins.

We should be far from confining our Thoughts of it to that Holy Ordinance we have this Day attended on. That Love of God (we hope) will be the noble Theme of our everlasting Praises above; and sure it should have a considerable Share in our delightful Meditations here below. Especially in ours who claim an Interest in that propitiatory Sacrifice which the Son of God was sent to offer, and hope to partake of all the inestimable Fruits of it.

We may remember the Time when we were perverse Enemies and Rebels against God, devoid of any filial Dispositions towards him, possessed with a wretched and most unreasonable Enmity against him, obnoxious to his Justice, but insensible of our Danger, and no way inclined to sue for Pardon and Peace. And yet then was the compassionate Eye of God fixed upon us. Then did his Bowels of Pity move towards us. Upon this Prospect of our wretched State did an infinitely gracious God form the Project of reconciling us to himself, and in Pursuance of that merciful Design, sent his Son to be the Propitiation for us.

But now we that were as far off are brought nigh. We that were once Enemies by wicked Works, are now reconcil'd. We that were under the Curse, are now blessed with all spiritual and heavenly Blessings. We that were condemn'd, are now acquitted and absolv'd. We that were Children of Wrath, and Heirs of Hell, are now the adopted Children of God, and Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life.

And this blessed Change is brought about by so amazing a Transaction, as God's sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins. On him our Iniquities were laid that they might not be imputed to us. From him was our Punishment exacted that we might be acquitted and absolv'd. Against him the Sword of vindictive Justice was turned, which shed his Blood, and pierced into his Soul, that he being wounded for our Transgressions, pardoning Mercy might stream to us thro' his bleeding Wounds. We were the Sheep that had gone astray, everyone after his own wretched way; but this the Lamb of God bore, that he might take away the Sins of the World, John i. 29.

And 'tis the Love of the Father that we must regard as the Spring of this astonishing gracious Dispensation. The Son of God was sent by him on this compassionate Errand and Design. For our Lord Jesus came not to make any Change in the divine Nature, but only to make an happy Change in the State of our Case. He came to offer to the injur'd Justice of God, a valuable Consideration for our Impunity. But he did this in Compliance with the Father's Will, and in Pursuance of his compassionate Design of restoring us to his Favour. His Love therefore must be chiefly ey'd and ador'd by us, as the Fountain and Source of this glorious and wonderful Transaction, in order to our Redemption and Salvation.

2. Let us improve our Meditations on this transcendent Instance of the Love of God, in order to the increasing our ardent Love to him.

And indeed, if there be any winning attractive Power in Love, if the most undeserved and sovereign Mercy can make any lasting Impressions on an ingenuous Heart; sure the unparallel'd Love of God must kindle some reciprocal Affection in us, and our Hearts must flame with divine Love, when, by serious Meditation, we set these powerful Incentives of it before our Eyes. In thus giving his dearest Son to die for us,

he has purchased a Title to our highest Love, at the dearest Price. And if our Love should bear some Proportion to the Discoveries and Communications of his, to what an unconceivable Height should it be rais'd! Where can we behold the Love of God more gloriously display'd, than in the Agonies of his dying Son, when he was made our Sin-offering? And what greater Blessings can his Love communicate to us, than those that are the Fruits and Purchase of his Blood? The dying Son of God is the clearest Mirrour, and liveliest Image of divine Love, in its greatest Condescension that was ever presented to the View of the World. God has, in this Transaction, engraven it, as it were, in Capital Letters, that he is Love, 1 John iv. 16. And how should the Sight and Contemplation hereof, transform us into Love? How should a superlative Affection to the blessed God reign in our Hearts, and exercise a sovereign Dominion there, powerfully prompting us on all Occasions to think, and speak, and act as this divine Principle dictates to us. And verily, those never truly believ'd, or duly consider'd this Instance of the matchless Love of God, who never felt a warm Sense of their infinite Obligations to him imprinted in their Hearts. Methinks, we cannot view this transcendent Love of God, without blushing at, and lamenting the woful Defects of our own. The Sight of it must needs convince us, how deeply we are bound to love him with all our Heart, and Soul, and Strength, and Mind.

3. Let us improve this Instance of the Love of God extended to us, when we lov'd not him, as an Encouragement to expect from him all that is necessary to our consummate Salvation.

This is an Inference which the Apostle Paul often teaches us to draw from these Premises. For thus he reasons, If God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how much more will he not with him freely give us all Things, Rom. viii. 32. What Blessings will he with-hold or deny, who has not with-held his Son, his only Son from us? What other Gift will he refuse to bestow, that has already confer'd this inestimable One? Nay, he that freely deliver'd him up, when his Affection to him might have created the greatest Reluctancy and Aversion thereto, will much more freely give those other Blessings which the gracious Propension of his own Nature inclines him to bestow. To the same Purpose the Apostle reasons elsewhere, Rom. v. 8, 9, 10. Having told us, That God has commended his Love to us, in that while we were Sinners Christ dyed for us; he adds, Much more then being justified by his Blood, shall we be saved from Wrath through him. For if when we were Enemies, we were reconcil'd to God by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled shall we be saved by his Life. If God's Love of Pity could move him to send his Son to be our Propitiation when we lov'd not him, what will not his Love of Complacency prompt him to bestow, when by loving him we are become the happy Objects thereof. If he extended such Mercy to us when we were consider'd as his perverse Enemies; what may we not expect when we are become his reconciled and adopted Children. If then he gave us the Son of his Love, how much more will he now give us the Inheritance of his Children. For now there is no Obstacle to his Love on his Part. He has therefore made his Son our Propitiation, that all the Blessings of his everlasting Covenant might the more freely flow to us thro' his atoning Blood. We have therefore all Encouragement to expect, that he will accomplish all those glorious Designs of his Grace and Love, of which he has laid the Foundation in the Sufferings and Sacrifice of his own Son.

4. Let us improve this Instance of the Love of God, in sending his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins, in order to the tempering our Love of God with a filial Reverence and Dread of him.

For God has taken care in this glorious Transaction, to display his Justice and Mercy in so admirable a Conjunction and Harmony, that the one may command our reverential Awe, as well as the other excite our ingenuous Love. And these two Graces are so far from being inconsistent,

consistent, that they never thrive so well as in an happy Union and Mixture. There is (thro' this Propitiation) *Forgiveness with God, that he may be feared*, Psal. cxxx. 3. He appears in this Dispensation inflexibly just and righteous, and therefore to be greatly dreaded; and yet infinitely gracious, and therefore to be lov'd. In his Severity towards his innocent Son, when our Substitute and Surety, even our God appears as a consuming Fire, and therefore to be serv'd with Reverence and Godly Fear, Heb. xii. 28, 29. But in his Dealings with us for his sake, he appears to be infinite and boundless Love, and therefore the proper Object of our most ardent Affections. Even the Relation of Children that raises us to so cheerful an Affiance in him, must not lessen, but increase our profound Veneration for him; even when we call him our Father, we must take care to pass the Time of our sojourning here in fear; considering that we were not redeem'd from (the Guilt of) our vain Conversation, by such corruptible Things, as Silver and Gold, but by the precious Blood of Christ, as a Lamb without Spot or Blemish, 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

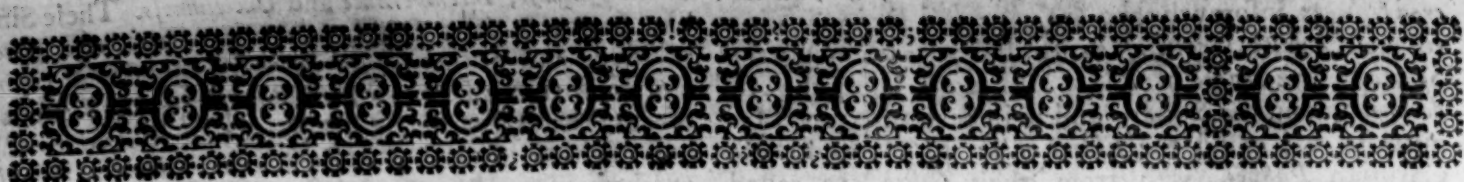
5. Let this Instance of God's Love to us, when we lov'd not him, teach us that excellent Duty of loving our Enemies themselves.

We are not indeed oblig'd to love them with a Love of Approbation and Delight while they continue our unreasonable Enemies; that were to approve their Malice. And God did not thus love us when we were his Enemies. But we ought to carry in our Breasts towards them a Love of Pity and Good-will, that will incline us to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use us, and render us easily reconcilable to them upon any credible Profession of their Repentance. And, tho' this be a Duty that corrupt Nature carries a strong Aversion to, yet sure the Consideration of this matchless Love of God extended to us, while in our State of Enmity and Rebellion against him, should have a powerful Influence to engage us to it. Did the blessed God not only cause his Sun to shine, and his Rain to descend on us, but his own Son to dye for us, while we were unthankful and evil; and shall we think much to express our beneficent Love towards our injurious Fellow-Creatures? Shall we be backward to overcome their Evil with our Good? Where is that amiable, that God-like Benignity and Goodness that should evidence us to be the Children of our heavenly Father, if we love them only that love us, and do Good only to them that return our Kindness and Benefits? Even Publicans can do as much as this: And the Question may be justly put to us, *What do ye more than others?* Our failing in this Duty to Men argues our great Forgetfulness or Inconsideration of our Obligations to the Love of God. And yet 'tis a Duty

of that Necessity and Importance, that our Lord has plainly foretold us, That we cannot expect that Compassion and Mercy from God, which we refuse to extend unto Men; and that he will not forgive our Ten Thousand Talents, if we forgive not our Brother his Hundred Pence. Let then the Injuries and Wrongs of others rather move our Pity, than our Revenge, that we may resemble him whose Bowels yearned towards us in the midst of our greatest Provocations.

6. Let this Instance of the Love of God excite us to mutual Love.

And this is the Inference which the Apostle himself, in the following Verse, draws from this Subject; *Beloved, if God so loved us, let us also love one another*, Ver. 11. Our Participation of the same peculiar Fruits of divine Love streaming to us thro' the Mediator's Blood, should greatly endear us to one another, and be a powerful Bond of mutual Love. The same Relation we bear towards the same heavenly Father that thus lov'd us, and towards the same blessed Redeemer that thus dy'd for us, should be sufficient to cement and knit our Affections. For the like Inference another Apostle draws from the Love of Christ, *Walk in Love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us an Offering and Sacrifice to God of sweet smelling Savour*, Eph. v. 2. Nay, the like Inference he elsewhere draws (among many others) from the Grace of the same holy Spirit; *If there be any Consolation in Christ, if any Comfort of Love, if any Fellowship (or Communion) of the Spirit, if any Bowels and Mercies; fulfill ye my Joy, that ye be like minded, having the same Love, being of one Accord, and of one Mind*, Phil. ii. 1, 2. For this marvellous Love of God to us has brought us into that near, but ennobling and endearing Relation to him, and to the whole of his Family both in Heaven and on Earth, that has laid the firmest Foundation for indissoluble mutual Love. And indeed, this mutual Love is, every where, made the distinguishing Character of his Children, being the genuine Impression that his Love has made and left upon their Hearts. Every one that loves him that begat, loves those that are begotten of him, 1 John v. 1. 'Tis when we love one another, that God dwells in us, and his Love is perfected in us, John iv. 12. And to what an Height of ardent Love to our Fellow-Creatures, the Consideration of this Instance of God's Love should carry us, the Apostle gives us a very surprizing Intimation; *Hereby perceive we the Love of God, because he laid down his Life for us; and we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren*, 1 John iii. 16. And sure we should never grudge those the Assistance of our Purse, or our Parts, for whom we must, if a just Occasion offer, be willing to shed our Blood.

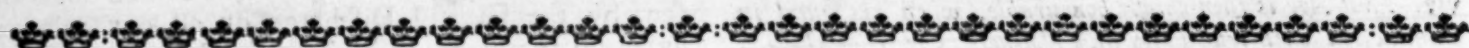


S E R M O N XXXII.

The just Commendation of AGED PIETY.

P R E A C H ' D

At the Funeral of Mrs. ANNE READING, of Rathfarnham, who departed this Life November the 14th, 1704.



P R O V. xvi. 31.

The hoary Head is a Crown of Glory, if it be found in the way of Righteousness.



IF so much Esteem and Veneration be due to an aged Saint while yet living (as my Text plainly intimates) it will every way justify our paying some Tribute of Respect to their Memory, when dead; especially when their Piety has been so conspicuous and shining, as to render it truly useful to those that survive them, to set before them such bright Patterns as may justly excite their holy Emulation to equal, or out-do them. And such an one I truly judge that late antient Member of this Congregation to have been, whom the Providence of God has brought to her Grave in a full Age, in the beginning of the Week past, like as a Shock of Corn cometh in, in his Season, Job v. 26.

And that I may propose such an Example to your Imitation with the greater Advantage, I have chosen to insist on these remarkable Words of Solomon, in which he shews us how amiable and honourable a Figure, great Age and great Piety make, when found in a happy Conjunction. *The hoary Head is a Crown of Glory, if it be found in the way of Righteousness.*

We need not be solicitous to find a Connection of these Words with the foregoing, these divine Proverbs being rather a Treasury of Pearls, than a Chain whose several Links have any exact Dependence. 'Tis sufficient that the Text contains in it self a very just and wise Observation, worthy of our most serious Thoughts, and capable to entertain us with useful and instructive Reflections.

There is nothing difficult in the Words themselves. No doubt by the hoary Head, we must understand old Age, of which 'tis usually the natural Symptom and Emblem. Such a hoary Head is a Crown of Glory; it renders a Person truly honourable, and worthy of Esteem and Respect. But then 'tis on this Supposition, that the hoary Head be found in the way of Righteousness. That such Persons be aged in Piety, having glorify'd God, and serv'd their Generation thro' a long Tract of Years, by a Course of useful, exemplary, and persevering Holiness. Then (and indeed then only) is their hoary Head such a resplendent Crown of Glory.

The Subject then which these Words offer to our Consideration, lies plainly before us, viz.

That old Age is honourable indeed, when found in Conjunction with exemplary and persevering Piety, or in the

more elegant Words of the Text, That the hoary Head is a Crown of Glory, when found in the way of Righteousness.

In speaking to this Subject I shall,

I. Consider what is here suppos'd and imply'd, viz. that there is in general, a Reverence due to Age; that an hoary Head claims some Respect.

II. I shall consider what is here directly asserted, that Age is then chiefly honourable, when it is found in Conjunction with true Piety.

I. I shall consider what is here imply'd and suppos'd, viz. That there is in general a Reverence due to old Age.

An hoary Head is so far a Crown of Glory, as to entitle a Person to some Deference and Respect from those that are his Inferiors in Point of Age. This is a Dictate of natural Light it self, and founded on a reasonable Supposition, that Age is usually attended with greater Measures of Wisdom and Experience. And much more does the Scripture inculcate this Duty of the Younger to their Elders. 'Tis a general Rule which the Apostle Peter gives, *That the Younger should submit themselves to the Elder*, 1 Pet. v. 5. Nay, so great a Respect was to be paid to aged Persons, that even when faulty, they were to be treated by their Juniors with a becoming Humility and Tenderness. And therefore young Timothy is caution'd not to rebuke an Elder, or an antient Person, but to entreat him as a Father, 1 Tim. v. 1, 2. Nay, the Law of Moses enjoin'd, that Persons whom Age had render'd venerable, should have all decent Marks of Esteem and Reverence paid to them, Levit. xix. 32. *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary Head, and honour the Face of the old Man, and fear thy God; I am the Lord.* Where it is observable, that the giving due Respect to the Aged is conjoin'd with giving due Reverence to God himself; to intimate to us, that the Contempt of them may be justly reckon'd, not only an Instance of Rudeness and Incivility, but even of Impiety and Irreligion. And how careful young Persons of old were to pay this becoming Deference to the Aged, you may observe in the remarkable Example of Elihu, who, in the Conversation that Job had with his antient Friends, did not presume to speak till they were all silent, and then begins with this modest Apology, *I am young and ye are very old, wherefore I was afraid and durst not shew you my Opinion, I said Days should speak, and Multitudes of Years teach Wisdom, &c.* And indeed, in most civiliz'd Nations, such a

Veneration was paid to *Age*, that elder Persons were accounted fittest to be entrusted with all *Civil and Sacred Offices*; insomuch that *Age* gave the Denomination to their publick Councils, as to the *γερουσία* among the Spartans, the Senate of Rome, and more lately the Aldermen among the Saxons: and so in Scripture, the Magistrates are call'd the *Elders of the City*. And those Christian Pastors, who from their Office are called Bishops or Overseers of the Flock, are called with respect to their *Age*, Presbyters or Elders (as judicious Commentators generally observe.) See *Tit. i. 5, 7*. Compared.

To all this I might add, how frequently *old Age* is promised as a valuable temporal Blessing, and particularly to those Children that reverence their Aged Parents, *Exod. xx. 12*. Nay, 'tis reckon'd among the Train of those Advantages, that ordinarily attend divine Wisdom, or true Religion: *Length of Days is in her right Hand, and in her left are Riches and Honour*, *Prov. iii. 16*.

Upon the whole, it appears, that *Age* is in it self (abstractedly considered) Honourable. And as the wise Man observes, *as the Glory of young Men is their Strength, so the Beauty of old Men is the grey Head*, *Prov. xx. 29*.

I proceed now,

II. To consider what is here more directly asserted, viz. *That Age is then chiefly honourable, when 'tis found in Conjunction with true Piety and Holiness*. Or, *that there is a peculiar Honour due to an aged Saint*.

Now there are two Things imply'd, that should be distinctly considered.

1. *That true Piety and Holiness is the chief Ornament and Glory of our Nature*.

2. *That it shines with a peculiar Lustre in an aged Saint*.

1. 'Tis here imply'd, *that true Piety and Holiness is the chief Ornament and Glory of human Nature*.

'Tis this that gives a true Venerableness to *Age*, and is the brightest Jewel in that Crown of Glory that adorns the hoary Head; and without this, *Age* it self loses the Honour and Respect due to it; there being none more justly despicable than those that are grown old in Sin.

Now that true Piety and Holiness is the chief Ornament and Glory of human Nature, will appear if we consider,

1. *'Tis this that renders us like to the blessed God, the Fountain of all true Honour*.

And what indeed can more ennoble and dignifie our Nature, than to have his amiable Image enstamp'd upon it? Holiness is the Lustre of all other divine Perfections themselves; and accordingly God is represented as glorious in Holiness, *Exod. xv. 11*. How much more must a Resemblance of him herein be to us our chief Crown of Glory? There's nothing more excellent can be said of the highest Angels, than that they bear a Conformity herein to that blessed God whose Face they behold, and whose spotless Holiness they incessantly adore and celebrate. See *Isa. vi. 23*. And we may well then reckon it the most honourable Character that can be given to the Children of Men, to be inflexibly just, exactly True, Faithful and Sincere, universally Merciful and Good to the extent of our Ability and Power, to be Wise and Pure, *as our heavenly Father is*. To be in such amiable and god-like Qualities as these, Imitators and Followers of him as dear Children, is indeed to shine as Lights in a dark World. There is a Beauty in Holiness, that commends it to the Eyes of all that are sober and considerate; nay, even those often cannot forbear to reverence Persons of eminent Piety, who are far from imitating them. Serious Religion strikes an Awe into the Minds of Beholders, and often extorts from the worst of Men, a secret Veneration for those in whom it conspicuously shines: So that in the Judgment of all that speak impartially, the Righteous is more excellent than his Neighbour, *Prov. xii. 26*. Whereas on the contrary, Wickedness is the real Shame and Deformity of human Nature.

'Tis that which renders a Man truly base and vile; sinks him below the Beasts that perish, by prostituting those more excellent Powers he is endow'd with, to the most dishonourable Purposes. There is an inseparable Turpitude and Odiousness, in Profaneness and Irreligion,

Injustice and Fraud, Lying and Falshood, Oppression and Unmercifulness, Intemperance and Uncleaness. These Sins like so many deep Stains, pollute the Hearts and Lives of Men, and are as noysom as those putrify'd Ulcers and Sores that infect the Body; nay, the very Remains of Sin, the Infirmities and Failures that cleave to the best of Men, are as so many Flaws in a bright Jewel, or as so many Blemishes in an exquisite Picture.

2. And as true Piety and Holiness conforms us to the most Glorious of all Beings, so it engages us in the most honourable Work.

It makes us Fellow-Servants with the Angels, who account it their highest Honour to execute the Commands of the great God, and to do his Pleasure, *Psal. ciii. 20, 21*. 'Tis justly esteem'd a high Preferment among Men, to be a Minister to an earthly Prince: But how much greater is it to be a Servant to the Blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords? Especially when our Work it self is so truly excellent and noble. And what can be more so than to walk and converse with God, to contemplate and adore his Perfections, to know, and love, and resemble him, to advance his Kingdom and Interest, to do the greatest Good we are capable of to the Bodies and Souls of Men, by the faithful Discharge of all our relative Duties, to regulate our Affections and Desires, to retain and govern our Passions, to obtain a steady and glorious Conquest over the manifold Temptations of this World, and to live in the delightful Views and Hopes, and steady Pursuit of a better. This is the summ of our Duty; and can we live and act to nobler Purposes than these? And how honourable is this Work, in comparison with that which Satan puts his wretched Slaves upon? How are they themselves asham'd of their Master, and their Service? What loathsome and hateful Drudgery do their Lusts (those cruel Task-Masters) put them upon? To dishonour God, to debase and pollute their own Bodies and Souls? To contribute by all the Disorders of a sinful Life, to make themselves and others (as far as their Example can reach) miserable both here and for ever?

3. And as true Piety and Holiness engage us in the most honourable Work, so it inspires us with the most glorious Aims and Hopes.

For hereby we are directed to the deliberate Choice of the most noble and valuable End we can propose; and engag'd in the vigorous Prosecution of it. And O how far do the nobler Designs and Expectations of a real Saint, advance him above the Men of this World! How do the latter sink themselves to the same level with the Beasts that perish, by seeking no higher than a sensual Felicity, in the momentary Enjoyments of this Life! How do they degrade an immortal Soul, while they turn it into a sordid Caterer for this corruptible Body, and live to no higher purpose, than to make provision for the Lusts of the Flesh to fulfil them! How do their debased Affections grovel on this Earth, and lick the Dust? How do they with the wretched Prodigal feed upon Husks, and content themselves to be Fellow-Commoners with the Swine? Whereas on the contrary, a renewed sanctify'd Soul understands its own Nature and Worth, its vast Capacity and eternal Duration; and therefore readily embraces the glorious Offers of an unseen and endless Happiness. It aspires to God himself, the Father of Spirits, as its all-sufficient Portion and Reward; to Heaven, as its native Land and everlasting Home. 'Tis by divine Grace begotten and form'd to the living Hope of an incorruptible undefil'd Inheritance that never fades away, *1 Pet. i. 3, 4*. Even the Saints under the Old Testament are describ'd, as confessing themselves to be Pilgrims and Strangers upon Earth (and consequently renouncing all vain Hopes of any fixed Abode or Happiness here below) and declaring thereby, that they sought a better, even a heavenly Country, *Heb. xi. 13, 14, 15*. And 'tis on the Account of these their glorious Aims and Hopes that the inspir'd Writer tells us, God himself was not asham'd to be called their God, having prepar'd for them a City (a durable

urable State of Happiness, every way commensurate to, or rather far beyond their highest Expectations) v. 16. And what can ennoble a Man more, than to be the Candidate of Glory, Honour and Immortality? What can more belpeak the true Greatness of his Mind, than to trample with Disdain on this World, and aspire with incessant Desires, and joyful Expectations, to the unconceivable Glories and Joys of the World to come? The true Christian's Hopes are his highest Honour. Once more,

4. True Piety and Holiness appear to be the chief Ornament of our Nature, as it entitles us to the most honourable Relations.

'Tis on the Account of this Image of his shining in us, that the blessed God assumes the Relation of a Father, and owns us for his Children. 'Tis on the same Account that our Saviour owns us as the living Members of his mystical Body, nay, condescends to call us his Friends and his Brethren, John xv. 14. Mark iii. 35. Nay, on this Account we are the Temples of God, through the Habitation of his holy Spirit: And 'tis as living Saints here, that we are Fellow-Citizens with those above, and related to the whole Family and Household of God, Ephes. ii. 19. And O what contemptible Trifles, what gaudy Toys are all Titles of earthly Honour, all Preferences to noble Extraction, and Descent from ancient and renowned Families on Earth, in Comparison of that real Dignity that accrues to us, by our being thus adopted into the Line of Heaven? Nay, how despicable are all the Advantages that we derive from such secular Honours, in comparison of the inestimable Privileges which as the Sons of God and the Heirs of Glory we are entitled to? Verily, a Saint in Rags out-shines the greatest wicked Potentate on Earth in all his glittering Pomp, in the Eyes of all that are capable Judges of true Honour. The former has that inward god-like Excellency and Worth, that the latter is entirely devoid of; and the former is entitled to that bright unfading Crown of Glory, which will for ever flourish on his Head, when the others Crown and Scepter shall fade, and his short-liv'd Pomp be buried in the Dust, and exchanged for everlasting Shame and Contempt. On all these Considerations it appears, that true Piety and Holiness is the brightest Ornament and Glory of human Nature.

But there is something here further implied, in the Observation, viz.

2. That true Piety and Holiness shines with a peculiar Lustre in an aged Saint.

The hoary Head is peculiarly venerable, and a radiant Crown of Glory, when found in the way of Righteousness.

But here I must premise, that by an aged Saint I understand, one that has entred on the ways of Holiness in his early Years, and has with Sincerity persisted and persever'd in them through the whole Course of a long protracted Life: One that (with pious Obadiah, 1 Kings xviii. 12.) has feared God from his Youth up; and continued to serve him faithfully to a great Age; and of whom the same Character may be given, as was once of Zechariah and Elizabeth (when they were well stricken in Years) that they were righteous before God, walking in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless, Luke i. 6. One whose Piety has begun in his green Years, and who has kept on steadfast in the Paths thereof, till grey Hairs have overtaken him.

Now that true Piety and Holiness shines with a peculiar Lustre in such an aged Saint, will appear if we consider the following Particulars.

1. Such an one has been preserved from that woful Mispence of a great part of his Life in the Service of Sin, which is the Shame and Sorrow of latter Converts to God and Righteousness.

For one that is converted after he had for many Years run with an ungodly World, into the same excess of Riot; and after he had sacrific'd the Flower of his Age to his wretched Lusts; though his everlasting Condition be now safe, yet it cannot but be Matter of deep Humiliation and Reproach to him, that he has alienated so great (even the most valuable) part of his

Life from the Service of God, and with the perverse Prodigal spent it in riotous Living. This will remain as a lasting Blot and Stain, the Remembrance whereof will be always bitter to him. With what Abasement does the Apostle Paul speak of his having been once a Blasphemer and a Persecutor, 1 Tim. i. 15, 16, &c. With what Humility does he on the Account of his late Conversion speak of himself, as one born out of due Time? 1 Cor. xv. 8.

Whereas he that has been an early Convert, and yet has his hoary Head found in those ways of Righteousness into which he entred betimes, has thereby escap'd much of that heinous Guilt that others have been involved in, and in Comparison of them, the whole of his Lifetime may be reckon'd as sincerely devoted to God, and spent in his Service. Such an one has truly liv'd long, whereas later Converts may with that old Man that was converted at 60, and being ask'd five Years after how old he was, justly reply'd, five Years old; I say they may, with him, date their Life (to their shame) from their Conversion. And from hence we may further infer.

2. That such an aged Saint may be justly supposed to have brought forth more abundant Fruits than others, to the Glory of God, and the Honour of his Christian Profession.

They that entred at the third Hour, have been much longer employ'd in the Vine-yard, than others that entred at the Sixth, or Ninth, or Eleventh; and therefore may be reasonably suppos'd, in proportion, to have labour'd more, Mat. xx. 2, 3, 4. An aged Saint is like an aged Tree of long standing in the Courts of God, that has for many Years, in some good measure, answer'd his Cost and Care by its seasonable Fruits. Such an one has had more numerous Opportunities of doing and receiving Good than others, and may therefore be suppos'd, by the faithful Improvement of them, to have been more eminently useful than others, and to have fill'd up his Station with more Work and Service. An aged Saint has been longer than others a painful Servant of God, an Ornament to his Christian Profession, and a remarkable Blessing in his Day and Age. And 'tis no small Honour to be such an one. Again,

3. An aged Saint has given more abundant Proofs of his Fidelity and Constancy than others.

He is like a Veteran Soldier that has long endur'd the Hardships of his Christian Warfare, whose Courage and Resolution has been try'd in many a sharp Conflict, who has resisted many a fierce and violent Assault, and who has hitherto adher'd with an unshaken Steadfastness to the Cause and Interest of his blessed Lord. He is like an old Tree, whom all the Storms that threatened to blow it down, have only made to spread its Roots the deeper. Such a Christian has been expos'd to all variety of Temptations. He has (it's propable) been try'd both with the Allurements and Snares of a prosperous Condition, and with the Difficulties and Discouragements of an afflicted one: And it has appear'd by his immovable Constancy under both, how upright his Heart has been with God, and with how inviolable Affection he has cleav'd to him. That his Love to God is too strong for the Waters to quench, or the Floods to drown, Cant. viii. 7. That he is built on a Rock indeed, since the Winds and Waves that have beat so long upon him, have not been able to shake his fixed holy Resolutions. And such a long Trial of a Christian's Faith redounds more to his Honour and Praise, 1 Pet. i. 7.

Once more,

4. Such an aged Saint is riper for, as well as, in all Appearance, nearer to the heavenly Glory.

He is like an aged Soldier, that after a long and successful Warfare, may now expect his time of Triumph and Rest: Or like a Passenger, that after a long Voyage, is now within sight of his desired Haven, where he shall be beyond the reach of Tempests and Storms. His Season of Labour and Suffering will soon expire, and be succeeded by a State of everlasting Rest and Reward. He is come near the End of that painful Race, which he has run with a resolved Patience, and has the happy

Goal, and the incorruptible Crown within his near view. He is like a *Shock of Corn* grown up to full *Maturity*, and fit to be gather'd into his Master's *Garner*, Matth. iii. 12. He is one that has been long trained up in the School of Christ, and therefore better prepar'd for the honourable Employments of the heavenly Court and Kingdom. While such an aged Saint has one Foot in the Grave, he has, as it were, one Hand stretch'd out to lay hold on the heavenly Prize. He is in this Sense nearer to the Kingdom of God than others.

On all these Accounts, true Piety and Holiness shines with a peculiar Lustre in an aged Saint.

It now remains, that we make some *Practical Reflections* on the foregoing Discourse.

Is then the hoary Head a Crown of Glory, when found in the way of Righteousness.

I. We may hence reprove that Contempt of old Age, that is so common in this degenerate Age.

This among Heathens themselves, has past for a very heinous Crime, when those that were Young treated their Superiors in Age with Slight and Disrespect.

Credebant hoc grande nefas, & morte piandum.

Si Juvenis vetulo non assurrexerit — Juv. Sat. 13.

'Tis therefore reckon'd in Scripture, a Sign of the great Corruption of Manners in a Nation, when Children behave themselves proudly against the Ancient, and the base against the Honourable, Isa. iii. 5. And 'tis reckon'd one Instance of the barbarous Usage which the Jews suffer'd in the Babylonish Captivity, that the Faces of the Elders were not honour'd, Lam. v. 12. That they respected not the Persons of the Priests, nor favoured the Elders, Lam. iv. 16. And indeed, nothing is more indecent, than for the Young to make the common Infirmities of Age, the Matter of their scornful Railery and Sport. This is in effect to laugh at themselves beforehand, and expose what may be their own future Condition. Nay, since the honouring of the Ancient is joyn'd with the fearing of God, we may (as I have already had occasion to observe) justly look on this Practice, as not only a Piece of ill Manners, but of Profaneness too. And if such Disrespect to the Aged in general be so sinful, 'tis much more so, when shown by Children to aged Parents. To requite aged Parents for their former Care, by all tender and dutiful Affection to them, is recommended by the Apostle, as an Act of Piety highly acceptable before God, 1 Tim. v. 4. On the contrary therefore, to neglect and despise them, is an Act of Irreligion and Impiety. Like Cham, to discover their Nakedness, is to entail a Curse upon our selves. And for the Eye that mocks at his Father, and despiseth to obey his Mother, we are told, that the Ravens of the Valley shall pluck it out, and the Young Eagle shall eat it, Prov. xxx. 17.

Let us then reform this shameful Practice, let us see that Age have its due Respect from all, especially in the dutiful Behaviour of Children to their aged Parents.

II. I would hence apply myself to those that are Young. And I would urge all such, to an early entrance on the Paths of Holiness, and Perseverance therein; that if they should live to old Age they may have this Honour, to have their hoary Head to be a Crown of Glory to them.

For I have shewn that this singular Respect is not so due to late Converts, as to those that have fear'd God from their Youth, and have kept on that holy Course to the extremity of Age. If then you would attain this great Honour in my Text, you must be Religious betimes, God must have the Strength and Vigour of your Age; and not be put off with those Days wherein you will have no Pleasure your selves, Eccles. xii. 1. 'Tis not only infinitely hazardous to defer the Service of God to old Age, because you have no certain Lease of Life, and so very few reach to old Age, in comparison of those that fall short of it, but also because so few of those that sin in their Youth, do ever truly repent in their Age. For their vicious Habits are so riveted and confirmed by a customary Practice of sinning, that the changing of their Hearts and Lives is represented as if it were as hopeless, as for the Ethiopian to change his Skin, and the Leopard his Spots, Jer. xiii.

23. And how little reason have such to expect any extraordinary Interposul of divine Grace for that end, who have so long resisted, and so justly forfeited all its ordinary Aids? Nay, should you, by a Miracle of Mercy, be converted in your Age, yet it must needs be Matter of extreme Regret and Shame, that though often called before, you have loiter'd till the eleventh Hour: That you have brought only the Refuse of your Time and Life to the Service of God. O then make serious Religion the busy Employment of your Youth, as ever you expect either the Comfort or Honour of it in Age. Remember that God challenges the whole of your Time, especially the Strength and Vigour of your Age. And the earlier you devote your selves to his Service, O how much Sin, and consequently Shame and Sorrow, nay, how much Hazard and Danger may you prevent, which your Delays will certainly expose you to! Besides that you'll then have probably more Time for your great Work, and the Opportunity of greater Usefulness in your Day and Generation.

Nor must you content your selves with entering on the way of Righteousness, without persevering therein.

Your whole Life must be a continu'd Endeavour to promote the Glory of God, and the present and eternal Good of others, and to prepare for the heavenly Glory, that when the Infirmities of Age shall come on, you may have the comfortable Remembrance of having spent your Strength and Health in his faithful Service, to bear you up under them. Give then all Diligence that your Work and Time may happily end together. Nay, as God is removing many of his ancient Servants, be you preparing to stand up in their stead, and to supply their Place and Room, by serving your Generation according to the Will of God, as they have already done. Consider what an indelible Reproach to Religion, and how fatal to your selves it would be, to begin in the Spirit and end in the Flesh? To pretend to serve God in your Youth, and to draw back from him in your riper Age, as if you resolved to make good that hellish Proverb, of a young Saint and an old Devil.

But,

III. I would hence apply myself to those that are Aged; and here I would distinctly speak.

1. To such as are old in Sin and Wickedness.

2. To such whose hoary Heads are found in the way of Righteousness.

1. I would speak something briefly to such as are Old indeed, but old in Wickedness and Sin.

And if it be such an Honour to be an aged Saint, 'tis on the contrary no less a Reproach to be an old Sinner.

And alas, how many such are to be found among us! There were indeed some Reverence due to their hoary Heads, if they did not stain that Crown of Glory, by their obstinate Continuance in a wicked Course. But O what a confounding Shame is it, to have liv'd so long to no valuable, nay, to the most wretched and vile Purpose! Nay, what a Shame to continue in your natural Ignorance and Darkness, after the Gospel has for forty, fifty, sixty Years, perhaps, shone brightly round about you! How great a Reproach to be still devoid of spiritual Life, when the long Date of your natural Life is almost expir'd! To be still dead in Trespasses and Sins, when temporal Death is just ready to seize you, and consign you over to everlasting Death: How woful is your Case, that have so wretchedly alienated the whole of your past Life from God, that if you should return now, you have nothing but the Dregs of Age to offer to him, and can only come with your lame Crutches as *Votaries* to his Service! Should it not fill you with Confusion and Horror, that your Time is just ended, and the Shadows of an everlasting Night of Darkness are stretch'd out upon you; and yet you have not so much as entered on the greatest Work you have to do for Eternity! That you have all your Days forgot the main End and Business of Life, having spent it in anxious Cares to please and pamper this Flesh, while the Concerns of your precious Souls, and ever-

everlasting State have been woefully neglected and postponed! O tremble to think that you have liv'd so long, only to grow more hardned in Sin, to fill up the Measure of your Iniquities, and by your Abuse of greater Forbearance and Long-suffering, to treasure up more Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God! Rom. ii. 4, 5. O blush at your amazing Folly, and tremble at your unspeakable Danger. Remember and consider that awful Passage, that a Sinner of an hundred years Old shall be accursed, Isa. lxxv. 20. O let not that Age which is in it self a valuable Blessing, prove only a Curse to you, by heightning your Guilt, and increasing your everlasting Shame and Punishment. To be an old Swearer, an old Drunkard, or Miser, &c. is a dreadful Character indeed. O tremble then for fear, lest your hoary Heads should come to the Grave with such a Load of unrepented, and consequently unpardoned Guilt. To your secure Souls, that stand so near the brink of eternal Ruin, I may well speak in the Language of the Ship-Master to sleepy Jonah, *What mean ye, O ye Sleepers, Arise and call upon your God, if so be he may think upon you, and you perish not for ever*, Jon. i. 6. Your Repentance had need to be both speedy and deep, when your Guilt has been so great and of so long Continuance.

2. I would apply my self to those of you, whose hoary Head is found in the way of Righteousness.

And that partly as a Monitor, and partly as a Comforter.

1. I would as your Monitor, exhort you to abound and persevere in the way of Righteousness to the End.

To you I would speak in the Language of the Apostle Paul, *Be not weary of well-doing, for in due time ye shall reap if ye faint not*, Gal. vi. 9. You have been long planted in the Courts of God, O see that you grow up there as tall Cedars in his Lebanon; see that you be there fat and flourishing, and such as bring forth Fruit in their old Age, Psal. xcii. 12, 13, 14. O let it be your Character as it was pious Anna's, when a Widow of Eighty four Years, that you depart not from the Temple, but serve God Day and Night, with Fasting and Tears, Luke ii. 36. Let it be your Honour as it was Thyatira's, that your last Works are better than your first, Rev. ii. 19. There is such a Thing as a latter Spring, O may your Fruits therein be more kindly and mellow. 'Tis true, we cannot expect from you that Warmth and Fervour of devout Affection; that is peculiar to the Heat of Youth; but we may expect more Soundness of Judgment, more Steadfastness of holy Resolutions, and greater Mortification to this World, and to all those contemptible Vanities of it, upon which you are so ready to close your Eyes, and above all, more of a heavenly Spirit and Conversation. We may expect that you should be more rooted in Faith, and grounded in Love; that your Evidences for Heaven should be more clear, and your Desires after it more strong; that you that stand nearer to, should feel more of the Powers of the World to come. We may expect that you should be more in the realizing Fore-thoughts and Views of that blessed Eternity, which you stand on the Borders of. And such genuine excellent Fruits as these will be indeed a bright Crown of Glory to your hoary Heads, they will be the best Ornament of your Age.

2. I would partly speak to you as a Comforter.

You have manifold Infirmities to struggle with and groan under, but you have suitable Encouragements for your Support. Your long Fidelity in the Service of God is graciously accepted by him; whatever Men may do, God never casts off his aged Servants. You may offer in Faith, that excellent Prayer of the Psalmist, *O God, thou hast taught me from my Youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous Works*. Now also when I am old, and grey-headed, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy Strength unto this Generation, and thy Power to every one that is to come, Psal. lxxi. 17, 18. And you may expect such a gracious Answer, as those Words of his to Israel, *You were born by me from the Belly, and carried from the Womb, even unto old Age, I am he,*

and even to hoary Hairs will I carry you, Isa. xli. 3, 4. 'Tis true indeed you have manifold Failures and Omissions to repent of, but you have the Testimony of Conscience to be the solid ground of your Rejoycing, viz. *That in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, you have had your Conversation in the World, not in fleshy Wisdom, but by the Grace of God*, 2 Cor. i. 12. What tho' the Almond-Tree flourish, your hoary Head being thus found in the way of Righteousness, is a Crown of Glory? What though Wrinkles deform your natural Visage, your Vertues shine the brighter through them? What though your outward Man sensibly declines, when your inward Man is renew'd by the vigorous Exercises of divine Hope and Faith? What tho' Pains and Languishings (those Harbingers of Death) are coming on, you may say as the Psalmist, *My Flesh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Strength of my Heart, and Portion for ever*, Psal. lxxiii. 26. Be encourag'd then to hold out in the way of Righteousness to the End; a few Conflicts more, especially with your last Enemy, and you come off Conquerors for ever. A few Steps more, and you come to the End of your Race, and gain the inestimable Prize for which you run. Your Labours are almost ended, and you are just ready to enter on your everlasting Rest. You are, as it were, within sight of that heavenly Shore, where all your Dangers are over. You have need of Patience, that after you have done the Will of God, you may inherit the Promises. And yet a little while, and he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry, Heb. x. 36, 37. And that I may enforce what I have suggested, both as your Monitor and Comforter, I shall briefly remind you of the Example of one lately deceased, whose hoary Head was found in the way of Righteousness.

And I may truly say of her, as the inspired Historian does of Mnason of Cyprus, that she was an old Disciple, Acts xxi. 16. I have good reason to believe she entered early on the way of Righteousness, and feared the Lord from her Youth. And for the time of my personal Knowledge, for now above twenty Years past, she has walked in them, with that Integrity and Steadfastness, that rendered her a bright Ornament to her Christian Profession, which she preserved without any observable Blemish or Stain. How accurate and regular she was in all relative Duties, her sorrowful Relations abundantly testify. And I am particularly told by those, that had the Opportunity of observing her, that she rarely failed of retiring, for the Exercises of Devotion, four times a Day.

Two Christian Vertues I always thought very remarkable in her, the one was great Humility, which the Apostle recommends as the Clothing or Ornament of a true Christian, 1 Pet. v. 5. The other, a charitable Tenderness for the Reputation of others; there being very few I know, or have known, more entirely free from the too common Guilt of Evil-Speaking. (I mean the Speaking evil of others, either unjustly, or without any cogent Reason or Necessity). I might add, that her Christian Love was catholic, extending to all in whom the Image of Christ appeared, without being any way confin'd to a Party. And how constant she was in her secret Converses with God, appears from many Papers of her own writing, found since her Death, containing Meditations and Prayers on the most remarkable Events of Providence, relating to her self and her Family. And her comfortable and peaceful End was suitable to such an upright Course: She gave such pertinent particular Advices to all her Relations about her, and pour'd out such ardent Prayers for them, as greatly affected them. And may they leave deep and lasting Impressions on all of them! She particularly charg'd them to love God, and to live so, that they might not be ashamed to meet her at the great Day of Accounts. When they wept about her, she check'd their Grief with the Words of our Lord, *Weep not for me, but weep for your selves; for I go to my God and your God*. She often repeated with great Pleasure and Fervency, those remarkable Words of Job, *For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that at the latter Day he shall stand upon the Earth*.

Earth. And though after my Skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God, whom I shall see for my self, and mine Eyes shall behold, and not another; though my Reins be consumed within me, Job xix. 25, 26, 27. She often recited that Passage of Malachi, Chap. iii. Ver. 16, 17. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkned and heard it, and a Book of Remembrance was written before him, for them that fear'd the Lord, and thought upon his Name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that Day when I make up my Jewels. So had she that memorable Passage often in her Mouth, Blessed are the Dead that dye in the Lord, for they rest from their Labours, and their Works follow them, Rev. xiv. 13. Yet she spake with great Humility and Abasement of her self, renouncing all Pretensions of her own Merits, and founding her Hopes on the Mercy of God, thro' the Merits of Christ. While capable of speaking, she often express'd her longing Desires to be dissolv'd; and when unable to speak, had her Hands and her Eyes lifted up, and in that Posture breathed out her Soul into the Hands of her heavenly Father. Thus did she live and dye in the Lord.

And may such Examples excite all of us to be Followers of them, that thus thro' Faith and Patience inherit the Promises. Such Aged Saints have long try'd the Ways of God and Righteousness; and when they thus recommend them to us, both living and dying, it should strengthen our Faith, and confirm our holy Resolutions. We see the Power, the Beauty, the Excellency of

the Christian Religion, conspicuously appearing in their holy Life, and triumphant Death. And may every such Example quicken our Progress, and encourage our Perseverance in the same Paths of Holiness: Especially the dying Advices and Charges of such Aged Saints should be of great Authority and Weight with all their surviving Relations, and should never be forgotten by them. And truly 'tis no small Allay to the loss of them, when we see, in their Death, the Observation of the Psalmist so fully verifi'd, Mark the perfect Man, and behold the Upright, for the End of that Man is Peace, Psal. xxxvii. 37. 'Tis a comfortable Sight, to see an aged Saint going off the Stage with joyful Hopes, to see their Sun set in a bright Cloud, to see them pass thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death without Fear, and enter in the Triumphs of divine Faith, into the everlasting Kingdom of their God and Saviour. Such we should regard, as happily gone before, and accordingly prepare to follow them. And may we all of us so early engage in the Service of God, and so steadfastly persist in it, that if Death overtake us sooner, it may never come upon us by an unwelcome Surprise, but find us with our Loins girt, and Lamps burning, in a prepared Posture for the coming of our Lord. If it be defer'd to Age, may our hoary Head be a Crown of Glory, being found in the way of Righteousness: And may we, as a ripe Shock of Corn, come in our full Season into the Granary of Heaven!

SERMON XXXIII.

EARLY PIETY recommended.

PREACH'D

To an AUDITORY of YOUNG PERSONS.

I CHRON. xxviii. 9.

And thou, Solomon my Son, know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart, and with a willing Mind: For the Lord searches all Hearts, and understands all the Imaginations of the Thoughts: If thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.

THE Counsels of wise and holy Parents, whose Judgments are matur'd by Age and Experience, should be receiv'd by their Children with a profound Veneration: But above all others, their dying Advice and Charge, as it usually carries extraordinary Weight with it; so it especially claims their attentive Regard, and should leave the most deep and lasting Impression on them. It were a great Failure, in Point of filial Affection and Duty, to forget and slight it.

Such a solemn Charge of a dying Father to his Son, you have here, even that of holy David, upon the Prospect of his Decease, to his Son Solomon, who was to be his Successor in the Throne. He had in the Verse before laid the like Charge on the Great Assembly, compos'd of the Princes and Heads of the Tribes of Israel, in the Sight of all Israel, and in the Audience of God, That they should keep and seek for all his Commands. And because the Authority and Example of Solomon (into whose Hands the People were, according to God's Direction, about to put the royal Scepter) might greatly contribute hereto, David does, with the Authority and Affection of a prudent and godly Father, address himself to his Son Solomon, in these moving and awful Words; *And thou Solomon, &c.*

In which we may distinctly consider,

I. The Relation he claims to him; *And thou Solomon, my Son.*

II. The solemn Advice and Charge he delivers him, *Know thou the God of thy Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart and willing Mind.*

III. The Arguments he uses to enforce it: Of which there are several very cogent ones.

1. We have here the Relation he claims to him; *And thou Solomon, my Son:*

So that from this Relation, he bespeaks his affectionate and dutiful Regard to the following important Advice, *q. d.* as thou either payest a just Respect and Deference to my Authority, as a Father, or would testify that grateful Affection to me, which my tender Care and Love have so deeply bound thee to, see that thou fulfil this my last Charge.

Whence we may observe,

That religious Parents should employ all the Authority they have over their Children, and all the Interest they have in their Affections, in order to the engaging them effectually to the Service of God.

They can never use their parental Authority to a more excellent End, than to advance the Authority of God in the Hearts of their Children, and to subject them to his Government: And they can never improve the Love their Children bear them to better Purpose, than by making Advantage of it, to enforce their pious Counsels, and by requiring their Love of God and his holy Ways, as the greatest Proof of their dutiful Affection to themselves. And indeed they wretchedly fail in their Zeal for the Glory of God, and in their Duty towards their Children; nay, they violate their solemn Promises concerning them, if they use not these excellent Advantages for recommending serious Religion to them. And, O that Christian Parents would more carefully imitate the holy Example here set before them!

But because I design this Discourse, chiefly for the Benefit of young Persons, I shall proceed to consider the Advice here given, and the Arguments us'd to enforce it: And because the Subject is copious and entirely practical, I shall, with all the Brevity I can, explain and apply both.

We may then here observe,

'Tis the Duty of all young Persons, especially those that are descended from religious Parents, to know the Lord God of their Father, and serve him with a perfect Heart: And they are under manifold peculiar Obligations thereto.

In speaking to this Observation, I shall, according to the Method propos'd,

1. Explain and urge this Advice given by David to Solomon, on all the Children of religious Parents.

2. I shall endeavour to enforce it by a particular Consideration of those Motives that are here suggested in my Text.

1. I shall explain and urge this Advice of David to his Son Solomon, upon all the Children of religious Parents.

Now in the Advice there are two Branches.

First, *Know thou the Lord God of thy Father.*

Now

Now our Knowledge of God may signify either barely an *Act* of our Understanding, or also an *Act* of our Choice and Affection. Both are, doubtless, here included.

1. This Knowledge of God may be consider'd, as an *Act* of our Understanding and Judgment.

And so we may be said to know God, when we are convinc'd of his Being; when we understand, in some measure, what he has reveal'd in his Works; but especially in his Word, concerning his Nature and the glorious Perfections thereof; concerning his Laws, as the Rule of our Duty; and especially, concerning his gracious Counsels and merciful Covenant, the great Foundation of our Hope and Expectations, and the Rule of his final Judgment.

And no doubt, that holy David does require Solomon, in this Sense, to know the God of his Father. For, he was not only oblig'd thereto as one of the People of Israel, to whom the divine Oracles were committed, but peculiarly as a King. For their Princes were oblig'd to write a Copy of the Law in a Book with their own Hand, that they might read therein all the Days of their Life, Deut. xvii. 18, 19. And O that Christian Princes were more diligent Students in the divine Law; how soon would they then become the happy Instruments to restore corrupted and declining Religion to its Purity and Power!

Some competent Knowledge of God is, indeed, a necessary Step to his true Service. Ignorance is no Mother of true Devotion. And in this Sense the unknown God is no fit Inscription on the Altar of his sincere Worshipers. We can pay no acceptable Homage to that infinite Spirit, without some suitable Apprehensions concerning him; we must understand his Laws, that we may obey them: And we can never manage a-right any serious Transactions with him, about our everlasting Concerns, until we be acquainted with the Tenour of his gracious Covenant.

And now let me urge this Advice on you that are the Children of religious Parents. Know ye the Lord God of your Parents. You have a much more clear and perfect Revelation of his Will, brought by Jesus Christ the Lord from Heaven, Heb. i. 1, 2. You have abundant Helps to inform and clear your Judgments: O apply your Minds to understand what God has condescended to make known, concerning his Nature, his Laws, and his Covenant.

To that end, be not Strangers to those Holy Scriptures, which contain that excellent Revelation. Let it therefore be your first Care, by the Perusal of these Holy Oracles, to become wise to Salvation, 2 Tim. iii. 15. Not only commit to your Memories, but endeavour, by frequent Meditation, to digest in your Minds, those great and momentous Truths, which Catechisms contain. Despise not those truly enriching and valuable Treasures of heavenly Wisdom. Spare no Pains to attain the practical Knowledge of the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom he has sent, whom to know is Life eternal, John xvii. 3. To understand the Sinfulness and Misery of your fallen State, the Methods of the Grace of God, in your Restoration to his Image and Favour, by Jesus Christ as your reconciling Mediator and Head, the Promises and the Duties of the New Covenant, is absolutely necessary to all serious Treaties with him, about your Recovery and Salvation. To know God then must be your first Step in serious Religion; and to do it a-right, will require a diligent Attendance to the Means of Instruction you are furnish'd with. But,

2. This Knowledge of God may be consider'd as an *Act* of Choice and Affection. And so to know the Lord is the same thing as to choose and own him to be our God.

'Tis no unusual Thing in the Hebrew Language, for Words that directly signify Understanding, to connote Affection. Nor is this Sense of the Word unusual in Scripture. You may observe it, Psal. i. ult. Matt. vii. 23. and many other Places.

And, no doubt, holy David here intended that Solomon should not only understand the Lord God of his Father,

but acknowledge him as such, and (in the Language of the Covenant between God and that People) solemnly avouch him for his God, Deut. xxvi. 17, 18. He charges him here therefore, to avow God's Propriety in him, and Sovereignty over him, both as he was the true God, who has an unquestionable Dominion and Authority over all his reasonable Creatures, and as he was the God of his Father, to whom he had been by Circumcision devoted, nay, to choose him as his God and his Portion for ever. For without this, the bare Knowledge of God would but aggravate his Guilt, and heighten his Condemnation, Rom. i. 21. Tit. i. 16.

Let me therefore urge this Advice also on you that are the Children of religious Parents, own the Lord God of your Parents. Let him become your God by your freest Choice, and most deliberate Consent. Avouch your selves to be his People, his voluntary Subjects and Servants. Let the baptismal Vow become your own personal *Act* and Deed; content not your selves with having the Filth of the Flesh put away by that external Institution, without the Answer of a good Conscience towards God, i. e. A sincere Re-stipulation and Promise of Faith in him, and holy Obedience to him, 1 Pet. iii. 21. Approve hereby the devout Zeal of your pious Parents, in consecrating you to God, and bringing you under the Bonds of his Covenant; ratify it now by your own deliberate Consent.

And because the Nature of this Covenant, by the Renewal whereof I am exhorting you to avouch the Lord God of your Father, as your God, will best appear in some brief and comprehensive Draught or Form of it, I shall suggest such an one for your Instruction and Direction in so important a Duty.

Set apart then some time for serious Meditation, and having duly weigh'd what that Covenant promises on God's Part, and requires on yours, address your selves to him in some such Language as this.

"Most great and glorious Majesty! Look down
"with a compassionate Eye on a guilty Sinner, that
"humbly prostrates himself before thy Mercy-Seat.
"I am indeed altogether unworthy of thy Notice and
"Regard. The Pollution of my depraved Nature,
"and the manifold Offences of my past Life, might
"justly expose me to thy righteous Displeasure and
"Curse for ever. But since thou hast in infinite Mer-
"cy declared thy self willing to be reconciled to all
"that, thro' Jesus Christ, return to thee; Lo! I come
"with the Shame and Sorrow of a relenting Prodigal,
"to cast my self on the Bowels of thy Fatherly Pity.

"I am, O Lord, already thine by manifold Obligations, as made by thy Power, preserved by thy Care, maintained by thy rich Goodness, and redeemed by that invaluable Price, the Blood of thy Son. I am thine also by the solemn Dedication of religious Parents, who have brought me under the Bonds of thy Covenant. And those Bonds I now desire personally to enter into. That holy Covenant I come now to renew by my voluntary Consent, and solemn Promise. For I would be thine by free and deliberate Choice, as I am thine by indispensable Duty.

"I do, with all Humility and Thankfulness, believe and embrace thy precious Promises, particularly those of Pardon and Adoption, of sanctifying Grace, and of the heavenly Inheritance, which thou hast made to all believing and penitent Souls thro' Jesus Christ. That blessed Redeemer I sincerely receive as my reconciling Mediator: To him I give up my self as my Teacher, Lord, and Saviour, resolving to become his Disciple, his Client, and Subject. Him I own for my Head; to him I commit my lost and perishing Soul, even to his Care and Conduct, as the great Shepherd and Bishop of Souls; thro' his precious atoning Blood and powerful Intercession, I hope for Pardon and Acceptance to eternal Life; and by him I now come to thee.

"Thou Lord art my absolute Owner and Disposer. I have too long lived to my self, but now I resolve to live to thee. I here offer up my Body and Soul, as a living Sacrifice to thee, unfeignedly purposing to employ

“ ploy the *Members of the one*, and the *Faculties of the other*, as *Instruments of Righteousness unto Holiness*. My *Time*, and *Strength*, and all that I am, and have, shall be used according to thy Will, and for thy Glory and Interest. I also yield my self freely to thy wise and gracious *Disposal*, and desire to acquiesce in all the *Determinations* of thy sovereign holy Providence. Let the Lord do with me what seems good in his Eyes.

“ Thou art my *rightful and sovereign Ruler*, tho’ to my Shame and Grief I have too long neglected and slighted thy just Commands: But I now unfeignedly own and *subject* my self to thy *Authority*. I approve thy *Laws*, as *Holy, Just, and Good*. I resolve to study them, to meditate on them, to propose them to my self as my *Rule and Guide*, and to endeavour after a sincere Conformity to all of them, without any *Exception or Reserve*. Do thou incline my Heart to thy *Testimonies*, do thou write all thy *Laws* there, and let thy sanctifying Grace enable me to perform in my Life, what I have sworn with my Tongue and Heart, That I will keep thy *righteous Judgments*. And O let thy Mercy blot out all my *Transgressions*, and overlook all my Failures, which yet I sincerely resolve to strive against.

“ Thou Lord art my entire *Benefactor*, and my *ultimate End*. I have too long forsaken thee, the only *Fountain* of my true Happiness, and sought it in the *broken Cisterns* of earthly Comforts. But now my Soul returns to Thee, as the only *Centre* of its everlasting *Satisfaction and Rest*. I thankfully acknowledge all the Mercies I enjoy, as the Gifts of thy undeserved Bounty: But let not the Blessings of this Life be my Portion. For I renounce this *World*, and all its *Riches, Honours, and Pleasures*, so far as they stand in *Competition* with thy *Favour*, and thy *heavenly Kingdom*. Give me an Interest in the peculiar Mercies of thy sure and everlasting Covenant. Make me an *Heir* of thy *incorruptible Inheritance*, and this shall be all my *Desire, and all my Salvation*. Thou art my chosen *Felicity and Portion*: O let the glorifying and pleasing thee, be my highest End and Aim!

“ And in order to the sincere Performance of these my *Vows*, I give up my self entirely to the Guidance of thy *holy Spirit*. I am grieved that I have so oft grieved him, by *resisting and quenching* his holy *Motions*. But I now resign my Soul and Body to become his *living Temple*, and resolve to follow his *Dictates and Counsels*. O let that blessed Spirit take entire Possession of me! Let him seal me to the *Day of Redemption*, and become the *Earnest* of my *eternal Inheritance*! Let him enlighten and purify, comfort and quicken my Soul, and prepare it for that *State of perfect Light and Life, Love and Joy*, that I am an *Expectant* of.

“ And as I thus devote my self to thee, so I heartily renounce all thy *Enemies*. I disclaim the unjust *Usurpation of Satan*, and will be no longer his voluntary *Captive*. I resolve, by thy Grace, to resist his *Temptations*, and to oppose his *Kingdom of Darkness and Wickedness* in this World. I renounce the *Dominion of Sin*, and resolve to maintain a perpetual Warfare against it. I renounce this *World*, as ’tis become the *Fuel of impure Lusts*, and neither its *Allurements* nor *Frowns* shall seduce me from my persevering Obedience to thee.

“ These solemn *Promises* I make to thee, O blessed Majesty, not from any Confidence I have in my own Strength, but wholly relying on thy efficacious Grace, to begin and perfect every good Work in me. And now receive me, O gracious God, according to the Tenour of thy merciful Covenant, into the Number of thy peculiar People. I am thy devoted *Subject and Servant*: O let me be thy reconcil’d, thy justify’d, thy adopted Child, a living Member in the mystical Body of my blessed Saviour, and an *Heir of thy precious Promises*! Accept then this Heart and Life which I dedicate to thee; and let this Covenant I make on Earth, be ratify’d in Heaven, and

“ be a perpetual Covenant, that shall never be forgotten! Amen, and Amen.

By such a Covenant as this, should the Children of religious Parents, in their early Days, own and avouch the Lord God of their Fathers, to be their God; for whose further Direction in this great Work, I would subjoin the following Advices.

1. Let it be done with the deepest *Deliberation*.

It becomes us not to be rash and unadvised in so awful Transactions, with so great and glorious a Majesty. We should duly ponder the *Engagements* we enter into; we should consider the *Strictness and Extent* of those holy *Laws* to which we vow our *Obedience*; we should count the *Cost of our holy Religion*, Luke xiv. 28, &c. Set all the *Disadvantages and Hardships* that may attend the *Profession and Practice* of it in our View.

Nor should we overlook those encouraging *Motives* that justify our Choice, and represent it as truly the wisest and the best. We should be convinc’d, that in thus devoting our selves to God, our Duty and our everlasting Interest are inseparably conjoin’d.

2. It must be done with the greatest *Seriousness* and *Sincerity*.

For sure we cannot set so awful and tremendous a Majesty before our Eyes, and when we have done, only trifle with him, in so solemn Transactions as these. We should call up all our Powers, and summon our Souls to the most serious Attention to what we are about, as knowing these are Matters of infinite Moment and Consequence. And O with what Integrity of Heart should we enter into the Bonds of that Holy Covenant, as sensible that we are under the jealous observant Eye of that God, who searches our Hearts, and knows all the Imaginations of our Thoughts! How solicitous should we be to approve our selves to his Judgment, to whom all the secret Purposes of our Minds are open and naked!

3. It must be done with great *Humility* and *Self-distrust*.

The Sense of our great *Unworthiness* and *Vileness*, should fill us with the deepest Shame and Self-abasement; and the Experience we have had of the *Deceitfulness of our own Hearts*, should make us diffident of our own *unstable Purposes*. We should therefore engage our selves to God in an humble Dependence on his Grace, for *Strength to perform our Vows*, and pray, as 1 Chron. xxix. 18. *Keep this, O Lord, upon the Imagination of the Thoughts of my Heart for ever, and prepare my Heart unto thee.*

4. It must be done with great *Freedom* and *Cheerfulness*.

We must esteem it as the Effect of God’s sovereign Grace, that we are inclined to become his willing People in the Day of his Power, Psal. cx. 3. And with what Alacrity should we bind our selves to God, when we consider, that we are never more happily our own, than when we are most entirely his. We should account it an admirable Favour, that the great God will admit us into such a blessed League of Amity and Peace with him. We should therefore joyfully embrace the Offers, and consent to the Terms thereof, as persuaded, that an Interest in his Covenant is more valuable than if the whole World were our Possession.

But I proceed to the

Second Branch of the Advice and Charge; Serve him with a perfect Heart, and a willing Mind.

No doubt, the Service of God does here include all the Duties of practical Religion and Holiness: All the Duties we owe to him, as our Owner and Benefactor, as well as our supreme Ruler. For indeed, his holy Laws enjoin all of them, so that his Service may fitly comprehend them all. ’Tis this universal sincere Obedience to him, which our practical Knowledge of him tends to prepare us for; and by paying it, we perform that holy Covenant wherein we so solemnly choose, and own, and avouch him to be our God.

O let us then resolve and begin to serve him. Endeavour to understand your Duty in its Extent and La-

itude. Study the Laws of God; read some judicious *Expositions* on the *Ten Commandments*, (that comprehensive *Summary* of your Duty) and often compare your *Hearts* and *Lives* therewith. Propose the Word of God as the *Lamp* to your *Feet*, and the *Light* to your *Paths*, *Psal.* cxix. 105. Enter on a Course of holy Obedience. Set a-part stated Times for *Reading*, *Closet-Prayer*, *Meditation*, &c. Consider your several *Relations*, and the several *Duties* they oblige you to. Observe the *Opportunities* of doing or receiving Good put into your Hands, to improve them, and the *Temptations* you are in danger of, to avoid or resist them. Learn the Value of *Time*, and begin to redeem it, with holy Care, for the best Purposes. Set up the Glory of God as your Aim, and begin to live as his, and not your own.

And here are two Particulars suggested concerning our *Service of God*, that may direct us as to the *Manner* of performing it.

1. *We must serve him with a perfect Heart.*

The Words must, doubtless, be understood of a *Perfection* (not of *Degrees*, but) of *Parts*. Tho' we cannot reach to *sinless*, we must not fall short of *sincere Obedience*. Not only must our *Bodies*, but our *Hearts*, our *Souls*, and their *superior Powers*, be engag'd and employ'd in doing his Will. And our *Hearts* must be so entire or *perfect* therein, as to make no sinful *Exceptions* and *Reserves* from any Part of his *Service*. No *secret Sin* must be indulg'd, and no *known Duty* wilfully neglected. We must baulk no *Commands*, because they enjoyn what is repugnant to our sensual *Inclinations*, or contrary to our worldly *Interests*, and because our Obedience to them is attended with *Hardship* and *Self-denial*. No Sin must be wilfully cherish'd, whatever *Advantages of Pleasure* or *Profit* it may bring. Our *Hearts* must not be divided between God and Satan; nor must we think to serve two so contrary *Masters* as him and *Mammon*, *Matth.* vi. 24. What David professes of himself must be our *Practice*, *I have kept the Ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God, for all his Judgments were before me, and I did not put away any of his Statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept my self from my Iniquity, Psal.* xviii. 21, 22, 23.

2. *We must also serve him with a willing Mind.*

His *Service* must be our *freest Choice*, and we must esteem it our most delightful *Employment*. We must not be dragged to it meely as *Slaves*, by the *Dread* of the *Whip*, but drawn to it from *ingenious Motives*.

To that End, let us often ponder the *Excellency* of God's *Service*. Let us not entertain injurious *Apprehensions* of it as if it were a disconsolate *Slavery*. For 'tis indeed our truest and our noblest *Freedom*, *Psal.* cxix. 45. Let us look on the *Ways of God*, not under those frightful Colours that Satan would paint serious Religion in, but as the Scriptures represent them, and as they are in themselves *Ways of Pleasantness*, and *Paths of Peace*, *Prov.* iii. 17. Be convinc'd that the Laws of God are *Good*, as well as *Holy* and *Just*, *Rom.* vii. 12. Even truly calculated for thy highest Interest; so that the more fully thy Heart is conformed to them, the more deeply is the Foundation of thy Happiness inlaid in thy own Temper and Frame. Esteem it thy highest Honour to be his Servant, and account it more ennobling to wear his *Livery*, than to sway the most glorious *earthly Sceptre*. Behold how sweet and delightful Work God's *Precepts* enjoyn, such as sow the Seeds of inward Serenity and Joy in our own Consciences. *Great Peace have they that love thy Law, Psal.* cxix. 165.

Often consider thy *endearing Obligations* to the *Service of God*.

Think frequently of those *Cords of Love* wherewith he has bound thee to it. Account thy *Service* to him but a just and grateful *Return* for his wonderful *Mercy*, in releasing thee from the ignominious and destructive Tyranny of Satan, and Servitude of Sin. Say, with the devout *Psalmist*, *I am thy Servant, O Lord, thou hast loosed my Bonds, Psal.* cxvi. 16. Let all

the numberless *Mercies* that sweeten thy Life, and much more those inestimable ones that are the *First-Fruits* of a blessed Immortality, inflame thy *Affections* to so gracious a *Master*, that constraining Love may sweeten all the *Hardships* of his Service, and render thy *Duty* thy perpetual *Delight*.

Especially look forward to the glorious heavenly Reward.

Be not therefore backward in serving so liberal a *Master*, whose glorious *Recompence* so infinitely transcends all our defective *Duties*. Cheerfully abound in his *Work and Will*, as assur'd, that *your Labour in the Lord shall never be in vain*, *1 Cor.* xv. ult. Blush that so glorious *Hopes* prompt you to no more of *Alacrity* and *Vigour* in doing his Will; and do it with more *Delight*, as convinc'd of the inseparable Connection between your *Duty* and your final *Blessedness*.

Having thus explain'd and urg'd upon you the *Advice* that David gives his Son Solomon, I come to enforce it by a more particular Consideration of those *Motives* that are here suggested in my Text. And there are four of them that lye plain before us; on each of which I shall briefly touch.

To every one of you that is descended from religious Parents, I may say as David does to Solomon, *Know the Lord, and serve him, &c.* For first, *He is the Lord God of thy Father.*

Thou hast the excellent *Example* and *Practice* of thy religious Parents, to lead and encourage thee in the Performance of thy Duty. He is the God whom they have faithfully own'd and serv'd, whose holy Ways they have recommended to thee from their happy Experience of them. They never repented of their Choice, nor saw any Reason to change their *Master*. Nay, their *Practice* will upbraid and reproach thine, if thou dost herein degenerate from their Steps. And as nothing can more rejoyce their Hearts, after all their painful Labours and Cares, than to see the *Entail* of *Covenant-Mercies* continued to their Posterity; so nothing can more effectually wound and break them, than to see you casting off the Bonds of that holy Covenant, and departing from that God, to whom they have consecrated you.

Nay, there is yet more in the Argument, *He is the Lord God*, who, as thy Owner and Ruler, has an absolute Right to thy utmost Obedience and Service; so that thou canst not disown and reject him, without the highest *Injustice* and *Ingratitude*. Nay, he is the Lord God of thy Father, who therefore farther claims a special Interest in thee as his own, besides the common Interest he claims in all his reasonable Creatures. Thou art, as it were, born in his Family and Church. Thou art his, by solemn Dedication. Thou wearest his Livery, and the Mark of his Covenant. Thy Parents had a Propriety in thee, as theirs, and a just Right to consecrate thee to God, and enter thee into his sacred Alliance. (For you may see by *Deut.* xxix. 11, &c. that their little Ones were capable of entering into his Oath and Covenant, together with their Parents). And therefore if God resented it in the *Israelites* as so heinous a Wickedness, that they took his Children which they had born unto him, and made them pass through the Fire to Moloch, *Ezek.* xvi. 21, &c. Will he resent it as a less Crime in thee, if thou shouldst thy self, at Years of Age, prostitute thy self to those wretched Idols, thy vile Lusts; and thereby alienate thy self from that God who claims a Right to thee as born, and as solemnly offer'd up to him? O therefore consider thou art pre-engag'd unto God. Thou art not left indifferent whose Service to choose. He lays the first as well as the justest Claim to thee. He order'd the Seal of his gracious Covenant to be set on the Seed of Abraham, *Gen.* xvii. 7, 8, 9. And he no less justly challenges the same Right to the Posterity of Abraham's spiritual Seed; I mean the Members of the visible Christian Church; The Promise is to you, and your Children, *Acts* ii. 38, 39. Thou canst not therefore disown the Lord God of thy Father, without violating those holy Engagements thou art already brought under. Thy rejecting him will be a perfidious

perfidious Breach of Covenant. And durst thou stand out and say, I renounce all Benefit by that Promise God has made, *To be the God of Believers, and of their Seed*; I disclaim all Interest in him as the God of my religious Parents; if not, O delay not to own him as thy God; refuse not the Duty and Service which thy Relation to him, as the God of thy Father, calls for. For thou dost it at thy utmost Peril, as will appear more anon.

2. He is the great Searcher of thy Heart, and understands all the Imagination of thy Thoughts.

And indeed this Argument seems chiefly design'd to urge us to that Sincerity in owning and serving God, which we are here advis'd to, q. d. Not only resolve to own and serve the God of thy Father, but do it with all Integrity, with the full Bent and Inclination of thy Heart. Think not to put him off with the Service of thy Body, or the Labour of thy Lips, when he requires thee to give him thy Heart, Prov. xxiii. 26. Dissemble not with him in thy external Professions of Homage and Duty to him. Resolve to obey and serve him without any hypocritical Reserves: For all the secret Purposes and Inclinations of thy Heart, all the hidden Thoughts of thy Mind, all the Resolves of thy Will, all the Motions of thy Affections, however they may be conceal'd from the View of Men, lye all anatomiz'd and open to the piercing Eye of the Omniscient God. So that if thou art not really what thou pretendest; If thy Heart and Life do not agree with thy Tongue in thy solemn Transactions with him, if thou secretly cherishest any vile Lust in thy Affections, if thou indulgest any hidden Course of Wickedness, if thou art acted in his Service no further than carnal Fear, or worldly Interest can carry thee; in vain dost thou hope to impose on his all-seeing Eye, which can clearly distinguish Truth and Reality from external Appearances and Shews, the Power of Godliness from a specious Form of it, and can discern the Hypocrisy of the Heart, under the most plausible Disguises of a formal Profession. To his Judgment therefore thou art chiefly concerned to approve thy self, whose strict Enquiry and Search nothing can escape.

3. To encourage you to own and seek the Lord God of your Father, here is this Argument suggested, *if thou seek him, he will be found of thee*, i. e. If thou art seriously concern'd to secure an Interest in his Favour and Love, he is most ready to receive thee into a League of Peace. If thou dost earnestly implore his sanctifying Grace, he is most willing to communicate it. If thou art inquisitive after the Knowledge of him, he is ready to instruct thee, and *if thou followest on to know the Lord, thou shalt know him*, Hof. vi. 3. If thou art earnestly desirous of Acquaintance and Communion with him, he is most ready to receive thee into it.

And though this be true of all, yet 'tis in a more especial Manner true of those that have been the Children of Religious Parents. For as God claims a peculiar Propriety in such as his Children, so he more eminently styles himself *their God*, and gives more abundant Intimations of his peculiar Favour to them. There must be some real and valuable Privilege included in that Clause of his Covenant, that he will be the God of the Seed and Posterity of his Servants, Gen. xvii. 9. 'Tis true it imports no Privilege but what may be forfeited by their degenerate Off-spring, (as I shall observe anon) but sure it must import a peculiar favourable Inclination to invest them in the invaluable Mercies of his Covenant. And indeed to them the Promises of that Covenant primarily pertain, as they are a part of that visible Church, which God distinguishes from the Infidel World, by peculiar Revelations and Offers of his saving Grace. See Rom. ix. 4. To them the external Means of it are vouchsaf'd. To them God's Prophets and Messengers are chiefly sent, to invite them to embrace the Tenders, and consent to the Duties of his Covenant. He appears most ready

on his part to continue the Entail of Covenant-blessings on them, if they do not cut it off by their wilful Rejection.

So that the Children of Religious Parents have particular Encouragement herein to their Duty. They above all others have no reason to doubt God's being graciously found of them, if they will but seek him. Covenant-Mercies are as it were reserved in Store for you, if you do not ungratefully refuse them. O then betimes own the Lord God of your Father. Claim the Benefit of his gracious Promise. Lay hold of the merciful Offers of his Covenant. Embrace his happy Yoke and Service. The sooner you do this, the greater Assurance you have of his powerful Assistance and merciful Acceptance. He has promis'd, *those that seek me early shall find me*, Prov. viii. 17. 'Tis most grateful to him when you do, as it were, give him the first Possession of your Hearts, and consecrate the Flower and Vigour of your Age to his faithful Service. And could I but this Day persuade you to do so, how might you account this as the Day of your joyful Espousals, and from hence date your happy Entrance on that Life of Grace, which eternal Glory shall compleat. And you have no reason to delay. You have seen several snatch'd away of late with a surprising Violence, and some of them in the Flower of their Age, concerning whom their Religious Parents would have had very melancholy Thoughts, if they had not discerned some Appearances of early Piety in them.

4. And lastly, Here is an Argument added, that may justly deter you from slighting this Advice, *But if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever*.

We may be guilty of forsaking God, or of Apostacy from him, either more secretly, when, though we keep on some customary Course of external Duties, yet our Hearts are wretchedly estranged from God, when secret Unbelief or Infidelity, Enmity against the Spirituality of God's Worship, and against the Purity and Strictness of his Laws, prevail and reign there. Especially when herein we decline from what common Grace had before rais'd us to.

But we then more openly forsake God, when we openly renounce the Profession of his Truth, or forsake the Assemblies of his People, or relapse from a civilized Conversation, into a Course of open and notorious Wickedness.

'Tis true indeed the more open Apostacy of Life seems here principally intended, and 'tis against that this Threatning seems principally levelled. And the more we have experienc'd of the common Operations of divine Grace, the more excellent Means we have enjoy'd, and the deeper Engagements we have been brought under unto God, if we should, after all this, visibly forsake him, by professed Infidelity, or a Course of gross and heinous Wickedness, we have the more reason to dread this terrible Threatning: For there seems something in it parallel to those awful ones, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6. Heb. x. 26, 38.

But we must also consider, that the secret Apostacy of the Heart from God, tends to, and often issues in that more open Apostacy of the Life. And if we indulge the one, we greatly provoke God to give us up to the other.

I know these Words may in part refer to that particular Covenant God made with David, concerning the Jewish Sceptre being continued in his Line and Family. And as Solomon was appointed by God to succeed him, so he here warns him against forsaking God, lest he should entirely cast him off, as he had done Saul and his Race. See that parallel Place, 1 Kings ii. 3, 4. But we have no reason to take that for the principal Sense of these Words, much less to confine them to it.

O then let me plead this one Argument more with the Children of Religious Parents! Do you not tremble at the Thoughts of being cast off by God for ever? Would you not apprehend it a dismal Thing, to have

have the *Entail* of Covenant-Mercies cut off from you and yours? To be entirely abandon'd by the Grace of God here, to be disown'd by him at the great Day, and to be cast out into eternal Darkness, when your godly Parents shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of Heaven? If indeed you would tremble at the Thoughts of this (as I hope none of you are so hardned in Wickedness, as to think of it without some Horror and Fear) O tremble at the Thoughts of your forsaking God now. Suffer not your Hearts to draw back, and decline from him. Beware of rasing out any serious Impressions that have been made upon your Minds. Suffer not your good Purposes to languish and dye. Lose not that Tenderness of Conscience, which your Parents have been so careful to cherish in you. Throw not off those secret Duties of Religion, to which you have been early habituated. Venture not on those common gross Pollutions of the World, from which pious Education has contributed so much to restrain and preserve you. *Flee* (dangerous) *youthful Lusts*. Or if you have been entangled, stop betimes, and dare not to take one Step farther in the Road of Hell. For if once you break through these Restraints, if you turn your backs on the Ways of God, and the Counsels of Religious Parents, if hereby you perfidiously violate your Vows, and disclaim your Duty to God and Interest in him, O fear and tremble least he also disclaim you, and make you even here the fearful Instances of such as he has openly rejected. Is it not obvious to our common Experience, that none are usually more dreadfully abandon'd by God, and suffered to run out into a greater excess of desperate Wickedness, than the degenerate Children of godly Parents? And is not this the visible Punishment of their

first forsaking him? Should I present to your View some profligate Monsters in Wickedness, and tell you that such you may e'er long be, you would be apt to startle at it (as Hazeel did at the Prophet's Prediction concerning him.) But alas, you are in danger of becoming such, if once you forsake the God of your Father. O let the many Examples you behold of such, be an awful Warning to you! And dare not to forsake the God of your Father, lest he should thus forsake you here, and remedilessly cast you off for ever! And O that this may not be the Doom of any that hear me this Day. But, my Brethren, I am persuaded better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation. And truly our greatest Hopes are from you, of the rising Generation. For from the Prevalency or Declension of the Interest of Religion among you we may form a probable Conjecture of the Continuance or Removal of the Gospel, (or what is the same, of God's Continuance with these Churches, or his visible Departure from them.) O then encourage our Hearts, and confirm our Hopes by your early Zeal, to know and own the Lord God of your Father, and to serve him with a perfect Heart, and a willing Mind! And may his Grace bless this seasonable Advice to that end! And since God has removed some that were hopeful that way, let's have the Satisfaction of seeing others come in their room. Since some Plants of Righteousness are so early translated to the heavenly Paradise, let's see new ones spring up, that the Vineyard of God may still abound with them, and his Church on Earth be a fruitful Nursery for Heaven. Then shall you, who are planted and water'd, reap the Advantage; and we that plant and water, the Joy of all our Labours, when God gives such an happy Increase.

DISCOURSE

CONCERNING

Profane SWEARING and CURSING.

I Hope I need not make any long Apology for a Discourse on this Subject. Where an Epidemical Distemper reigns, no Man can be blam'd for his regular Endeavours, either to cure the infected Persons themselves, or to stop the Spreading of the fatal Contagion to others. And I fear, as to these Vices the Infection is too general, and the Disease too deeply rooted, to render any Attempts unnecessary, that are truly conducive to attain the proposed End. And for the Method insisted on in this Discourse, I shall only suggest, That I thought it needful first to lay open the Nature of these detestable Sins (as the late Act of Parliament justly calls them); Partly, That if possible Men's Conviction concerning the Absurdity and Folly of them, may happily prevent the occasion of penal Severities (which how gentle soever, are never any farther desirable than they are absolutely necessary). Partly, To satisfy all unprejudic'd Persons, that those concern'd in promoting the Execution of this Law, are act'd by no other Principles than their regular Zeal for the Honour of Almighty God, and their sincere Charity to the Offenders themselves, the generality of whom, 'tis to be feared, are too stupid and hardned in their wretched Practice, to be reason'd out of it, and seem only capable of this last and harshest method of Cure.

I shall therefore in prosecution of my present Design treat on these three general Heads.

I. I shall briefly represent the heinous Nature of those two common Vices of the Age, profane Swearing and Cursing, in order to dissuade Men from the Practice of them.

II. I shall offer something to excite both Magistrates and private Persons to their Duty, in order to the suppressing these Vices, by the Execution of the Law lately made against them.

III. I shall modestly examine what Ground there is for the loud Complaints lately made against Clandestine Informations.

I. I shall briefly represent the Heinousness of those two common Vices of the Age, Profane Swearing and Cursing, in order to dissuade Men from the Practice of them.

And to prepare my way for this, it will be requisite to premise some Account of the nature of these Sins, by stating the true Notions of them. And,

First, For the Sin of Profane Swearing, we shall the more clearly apprehend what it is, if we first consider the nature of an Oath in general.

Now an Oath has been defin'd by the Masters of Heathen Morality, *A religious Affirmation*, or, *A calling the Deity to witness in a controverted Matter*. And it has been defin'd by the generality of Christian Writers to the same purpose, *An Appeal to some supernatural Power, as the Witnesses of the Truth of what we affirm or promise, and the Avenger of our Falshood and Perfidiousness if we lye*.

And indeed all do agree, that such an Appeal is an Oath in the most strict and proper Sense.

But this Account of an Oath seems only to agree to those wherein we swear by some *real* or *supposed* Deity, or at least some Inhabitant of the invisible World, that cannot be produc'd as a Witness here on Earth. Whereas Men may swear by inanimate and insensible Creatures themselves, who are not capable of giving any Testimony at all to the Truth of what they say.

Thus the Heathens were wont to swear by the Heavens or the Earth, by the Sun or the Stars, &c. The Jews by *Jerusalem*, the Temple, or the Altar, &c. And therefore those who place the Nature of an Oath in such an Appeal to a higher Witness that is not producible in human Courts of Judicature, do suppose that such Expressions, as by the Heavens, by the Earth, &c. are only Oaths in an improper Sense, or rather the Abuse of an Oath, being senseless Appeals to those things as the Witnesses of the Truth of what we speak, that are not capable of giving any such Testimony.

But on the other hand, since such Expressions were accounted *Oaths* in the common Judgment of Mankind, and our Saviour himself mentions them as proper Instances of Swearing, (See *Matth. v. 34, 35*, &c. compared with *James v. 12*.) others have rather chosen to give such an extensive Notion of an Oath, as may include these as proper Instances of Swearing, and therefore define an Oath to be, *The Pawning some supposed undoubted Being, as a Pledge of the Truth of what we say, with an implicit Imprecation of some Penalty on our selves in case we lye*. Thus as when Men swear by God, they pawn his Being and Perfections for the Truth of what they declare, and in Effect wish if they lye, to be dealt with as those that deny them; so when they swear by the Heavens or the Earth, by the Sun or Stars, &c. The meaning of the Oath is, as sure as there is a Heaven and Earth, a Sun or Stars, so true is what I speak; and if I lye, let me be esteem'd and dealt with as if I had impudently deny'd the Existence of these Things. So when Men swear by their Faith or Conscience, or Hope of Salvation, they do in Effect pawn these for the Truth of their Assertions or Promises, and in Effect wish if they lye, to be treated as Persons that have renounc'd all pretensions to Faith, to Conscience, or to the Hope of Salvation. So when Men swear by their Head, they make that a kind of pledge of the Truth of what they speak, and virtually imprecate some Mischief on it in case they lye. So that this latter Description of an Oath seems at first somewhat different from the former, and more comprehensive; and indeed, it what is call'd swearing by Creatures, be in the strict

and proper Sense an Oath, this seems the more clear and accurate Account of it.

But yet we may in a great Measure reconcile these two Descriptions of an Oath, and make them of equal extent, if we take what our Saviour suggests in reference to Swearing by Creatures in its utmost Latitude, *viz.* That on the Account of that relation they all some way or other bear to God, there is in all Swearing by Creatures, though not an express yet an implicit Invocation of God, and Appeal to him. Thus he charges those that swore by the Heavens or the Earth, as virtually and by just Construction Swearing by that God, whose Throne the one, and whose Footstool the other was. Nay, he supposes those that swore by their Head, implicitly to swear by that God whose Workmanship it was, since we our selves could not make one Hair of it black or white, *Matth. v. 34, 35, 36.* compar'd with *Matth. xxiii. 21, 22.* For he speaks this (as Dr. *Petit* in his various Lectures well observes) in opposition to the Jewish Doctors, who did not think Swearing by Creatures to be properly Oaths, nor to have any obligatory Virtue. For they thought no Oaths binding, but those in which they swore by the Name of God, (excepting their Oath by the Gold of the Temple and *Corban*, See *Matth. xxiii.*) And therefore our Lord on the contrary intimates to them, That God himself was interested whenever they swore by any of his Creatures; for since they could bear no proper Testimony to the Truth of their Assertions, or Promises, the Appeal was implicitly and by just Interpretation made to him, and he was concern'd to punish the false Appellant. So that whoever by such Swearing pawns any of God's Creatures for the Truth of his Words, does virtually call their Maker to be his Witness, and engage him to avenge the Indignity offer'd to his own Works, when they are abused to countenance our Lying and Falshood. It is not therefore of any great Moment as to our Practice, whether of these two Notions of an Oath we prefer and follow.

Having thus stated the general Notion of an Oath, we may more easily determine what profane Swearing is.

There is some Swearing in it self sinful and profane, and can never be lawfully used on any occasion. As the Swearing by a false God; because such an Oath attributes the Perfections of the only true God to a contemptible Idol, which is a high Degree of Blasphemy.

But on the other Hand, our Swearing by the true God, is either lawful and good, or sinful and profane, according to the Circumstances wherein that Action is used.

To swear by the blessed God, is so far from being in its own Nature an evil or impious Action, that on the contrary, when used on just and necessary Occasions, 'tis an Action highly conducive to the Honour of God, and to the publick Good. 'Tis an Action highly conducive to the Honour of God, whose glorious Perfections are openly acknowledged in those solemn regular Appeals we make to him, in such important Cases, wherein there is no other way left to confirm the Truth of what we speak. And in such Cases the Jews were by the Law of *Moses* not only permitted, but requir'd to swear by the Name of God, *Deut. vi. 13.* That being one Branch of the religious Worship due to him. Nay, 'tis an Action no less conducive to the publick Good. It being one of the most proper and effectual Means to end Strifes and Controversies among Men, by confirming the Truth of what they speak, *Heb. vi. 13.* For since in so manifold Cases we must depend on human Testimonies for finding out Truth, we can have no greater Assurance that Men speak truly, than when they solemnly appeal to God as the Witness of it, and their dreadful Avenger if they lye. For 'tis reasonably supposed, that if any

thing can oblige Men to a strict regard to Truth, in what they deliberately affirm, this awful Bond will. And Charity prompts us to hope that there are but few whose Consciences are so fear'd as to have no Reverence for an Oath, and no Dread of God's terrible Vengeance against those, that by Perjury abuse his sacred Name to the Support of known Falshood.

And accordingly the Holy Scriptures abound with the Examples of good Mens Swearing on such solemn Occasions. The Instances in the Old Testament are numerous. Nay, even the New Testament contains frequent Examples of this kind, even after the strict general Prohibition of our Saviour, *Swear not at all.* For learned Criticks have made it evident, that our Saviour himself did thus swear when adjur'd by the High-Priest, *Matth. xxvi. 62, 63, 64.* compar'd with *Lev. v. 1.* And there is no pretence to doubt of this being several times practis'd by the Apostle Paul in his Epistles. See *2 Cor. xi. 31.* *Rom. i. 9.* *Gal. i. 20.* *2 Cor. i. 23.* *1 Thes. v. 27.* And as the Quakers are the only People that pretend to deny the Lawfulness of Swearing, by interpreting our Saviour's Prohibition in the strictest Sense, so I do not see that they are herein consistent with themselves. For they do themselves frequently make solemn Appeals to God for the Truth of what they say; as *Barclay* himself tells us, They are wont on solemn occasions to say, *We speak the Truth in the Fear of God, and before him, who is our Witness, and the Searcher of our Hearts.* He does indeed deny this to be an Oath, (as he does the forementioned Expressions of the Apostle Paul) but I take his Denial to be contrary to the common Sense of Mankind, concerning the Nature and Import of an Oath. So that 'tis rather the Name of an Oath, and the Circumstances of Swearing used among us, that they seem to boggle at, than the Thing it self.

Nor is Swearing by Creatures on such occasions unlawful in it self, when the Creature is only named in subordination to God, so that the Appeal it self is evidently intended and directed to him. Thus we read of *Moses* calling the Heaven and Earth to record against the *Israelites*, that he had set before them Life and Death, *Deut. xxx. 19, 21, 28.* So *Hannah* swears to *Ely*, *As thy Soul liveth, my Lord, I am the Woman that stood by thee here, praying to the Lord,* *1 Sam. xx. 3.* So *Abigail*, *1 Sam. xx. 26.* So *Uriah*, *2 Sam. xi. 11.* So in our common Form of Swearing we use these Words, *So help me God, and the Contents of this Book.* So it has been usual with good Men in order to their Vindication from gross publick Calumnies, to call God, Angels, and Men, to attest the Truth of what they offer in their own Defence.

Now that Swearing (by God or his Creatures) which is in it self lawful, when used in a solemn Manner on so important Occasions, degenerates into sinful or profane Swearing, when 'tis us'd in our ordinary Converse, without any such due Seriousness and Solemnity on any just Occasion, that should render it needful to attain the forementioned Ends. For as sacred Things are said to be profan'd, when they are irreverently manag'd and prostituted to any mean or vile Use, so is an Oath profan'd, when we treat this awful Act of Religious Worship with so little Respect, as to prostitute it to common and mean Purposes, in attesting our ordinary Discourse; whereas it should never be us'd, but where there is apparent need of it, to confirm some doubted Truth, that must be determin'd by human Testimony. And the more expressly the Name of God himself is invoked in such Oaths, the Profaneness of them is more evident and uncontestable. For 'tis a manifest Indignity to that High and Glorious Being, that his Sacred Name should be thus interpos'd, and rash Appeals made to him upon every frivolous Occasion, meerly to vent our irregular Heat, or to give credit to every trifling Assertion in our common

* See his Works in Fol. p. 553.

Conversation. Nay, even when we do not make any explicit Appeal to God, 'tis yet a real *Pollution* of his glorious and adorable Name, when we rashly toss it in our Mouth for no other purpose than to signify some foolish Wonder, or express some idle Passion, or applaud some vain Jest. Thus, O Lord, and O God, are common in the Mouths of many when they serve to no other end, but to fill up an empty Gap in their ordinary Discourse.

Secondly, For the Sin of *profane Cursing*, the Notion of it is more plain and obvious.

'Tis indeed true, that if we take *Cursing* in a large Sense, we cannot absolutely condemn it as sinful.

For,

1. If we give the Name of *Curses* to all those *Denunciations of the Vengeance of God against Sinners*, which are utter'd by a prophetick Spirit, there is no doubt of the Lawfulness of such Curses.

And indeed 'tis highly probable, that many of those Expressions which occur in the *Psalms*, and which our Translation makes to be Imprecations, are no other than Predictions of those Evils to the Churches Enemies which the Spirit of God dictated to the Inspired Penmen. And the Original does much favour this Supposition; those Expressions being usually not in the Imperative Mood, but in the Future Tense of the Indicative, and may be more properly rendered, *mine Enemies shall be confounded*, than, *let them be so*.

2. All *Cursing* is not *unlawful*, that does imply the *wishing some kind of Evil to others*.

For doubtless we may in reference to the Enemies of the true Religion, and indeed to all wicked and mischievous Persons, without the least Violation of the great Law of Charity, with *Disappointment* in their pernicious Designs and Enterprizes, and the *Shame and Confusion* that such Frustration of their Attempts will occasion. Nay, in any case of publick Contests, wherein the Interest of true Religion, or of important civil Right is concern'd, we may lawfully wish, and pray for Success, to those who espouse the just and righteous Side of the Cause, against those that would either subvert the true Religion, or invade and oppress the Civil Rights of others. Nay, this seems consistent with Charity, whether such Persecutors and Oppressors be supposed incorrigible or not. For if *incorrigible*, their Overthrow is a very desirable publick Blessing. And if *corrigible*, their ill Success is the most likely means to convince and reform them, as their prosperous one would be to harden them.

And to the one or other of these Heads, we may reduce all those Imprecations against their Enemies that the Pen-men of the *Psalms* use, without supposing any thing in them contrary to the meek and forgiving Disposition, which the Law of Christ so positively enjoins.

There are indeed some *Curses* us'd by good Men in Scripture, that do not belong to these Heads. Such as those of *Job* and of *Jeremy*, chiefly level'd against the *Day of their Birth*, *Job* iii. *Jer.* xx. But then I think we are under no Obligation to justify them. They seem rather mention'd for our Caution, as Instances of human Infirmary, of too great Impatience and Discontent under the Pressure of their present Afflictions.

The *Cursing* then which the Scriptures condemn, (and which this Act of Parliament refers to) implies such *rash Wishes of Evil to others or our selves*, which we utter either in our Passion, or from a Spirit of Malice and Revenge, or from a meer Pleasure in such hellish Language.

And it falls under the Notion of *profane Cursing*, as we either directly and expressly, or by just Construction solicit the Vengeance of God, for the Infliction of such Mischiefs on others, or our selves. And the greater the Mischiefs are which we thus rashly imprecate, and the more eminently the Justice of God is concern'd in the Execution of them, the higher is the Degree of *Profaneness*. So that the common Expressions which Cursers now use, when

they call on God to *damn themselves or others*, contain the most horrid Guilt that this Sin can easily admit of. And truly that other Phrase falls little short of it, by which Men so often give *themselves or others* to the *Devil*, who is consider'd in such wretched Imprecations as the Executioner of divine Justice.

Having stated the general Notion of profane Swearing and Cursing, I come now to offer a few Arguments to dissuade Men from the Practice of them.

And those shall be drawn from the *express Prohibition of these Sins*, from the *intrinsic Evil and pernicious Tendency of them*, from the *Threatnings of God denounc'd against them*, and from the *Weakness and Folly of the Pretences alledg'd to excuse or extenuate them*.

First, I begin with the *express Prohibition of these Vices*.

Thus for *common Swearing*, that this is prohibited by the Law of God, can be doubted by none that own the divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures. If we suppose (with the generality of Expositors) that our Saviour's Sermon in the Mount, gives us an Interpretation of, rather than an Addition to the Precepts of the *Decalogue*, there is no question but *common Swearing* is one Instance of *taking God's Holy Name in vain*, forbidden in the *Third Command*. But none ever pretended to deny, that our Saviour here forbids all such *common Swearing*, when he so strictly charges us not to swear at all, when he enjoins that our Communication be *Yea, Yea; Nay, Nay*, and adds this reason of it, *For whatsoever is more than these comes of Evil*, *Matth.* v. 34, 38. For he delivers this Charge in opposition to the *Jewish Doctors*, who themselves thought *Swearing by the Name of God*, in their ordinary Conversation *unlawful*, but made greater Allowance for what they accounted *smaller Oaths*, as *Swearing by Creatures*, without any express Appeal to God, or mention of him. And since our Lord condemns all *lesser Oaths* in common Conversation, he must in all reason be understood much more to forbid all *common Swearing by the Name of God*. And 'tis evident that the *Apostle James* so understood these Words of our Saviour, when he delivers the like Prohibition in so peremptory and comprehensive Expressions, *But above all Things, my Brethren, swear not, neither by Heaven, nor by Earth, neither by any other Oath. But let your Yea be Yea, and your Nay be Nay, &c.* *James* v. 12. So that no Man can doubt of *common Swearing* being a plain Violation of the Law of Christ. And 'tis such an one as is manifestly *wilful*. Every Man can easily forbear if he please to speak irreverently of his Earthly Prince, and sure he may as easily forbear to treat with the like bold Irreverence the sacred Name of the Sovereign Majesty of Heaven.

Nor is *rash Cursing* less evidently forbidden: Thus we are charg'd by the *Apostle Paul*, *Bless, and curse not*, *Rom.* xii. 14. And sure if we were allow'd to curse any, it shou'd be those that are our unreasonable and malicious Enemies. But we must be so far from wishing Evil to them, that on the contrary we are enjoin'd, *To love our Enemies, to bless them that curse us, to do good to them that hate us, and to pray for them that despitefully use and persecute us*, *Matth.* v. 44. And accordingly the *Apostle James* mentions *Cursing* as one great Instance and Proof of the *Tongue's being an unruly Evil, full of deadly Poyson*, *Jam.* iii. 8, 9. And 'tis so heinous an Evil in the *Psalmist's* Judgment, that he gives this as the genuine Character of a wicked Person, *That his Mouth is full of Cursing*, *Psal.* x. 7. And no wonder, when this Sin is so opposite to that Love of our Neighbour which is the Sum of all the Duties of the second Table. And for that Sin of a Man's *cursing himself*, 'tis evidently included and imply'd in the foremention'd Prohibitions. And if it be not so expressly mention'd, 'tis only because 'tis too unnatural a Crime to need any explicit Condemnation. And indeed it argues a monstrous Degeneracy of human Nature, that any Man should be found guilty of it.

Those

Those then must needs be inexcusable, who profess their Veneration for the Authority of our blessed Saviour, and yet allow themselves in the perverse Violation of Precepts so plain, so just, and so easie to be observ'd. Sure such Persons should be sensible of the notorious Inconsistency of their common Practice with the Sincerity of their Profession. To be a *Christian*, and yet a common *Murderer, Adulterer, Whoremonger, Thief, Drunkard, &c.* look at first view very *incompatible*: And sure it is as hard to reconcile a Man's being a *Christian*, with his being a common *Swearer or Curser*. So that if Men will not renounce these Vices, they wou'd in some respects do more Right to Christ and his Holy Religion, by openly renouncing his Name, and casting off that honourable Livery of his, which they only disgrace and stain by wearing of it.

Secondly, I would farther argue against these Vices, from the *intrinsic Evil and pernicious Tendency of them*.

I begin with *common Swearing*, and I here chiefly intend that Swearing wherein the Name of God is more expressly us'd, and which is therefore especially call'd *Profane Swearing*; and of the malignant Nature and Tendency of this Sin, I shall only among many others mention the following Instances.

1. I have already suggested, *That common Swearing does in the very Nature of it, debase a solemn Act of religious Worship, by prostituting it to a common and mean Use.*

'Tis only some momentous Occasion and urgent Necessity, can warrant such solemn Appeals to God, and they should be made with all Appearance of profound Awe and Reverence. So that this Act of divine Worship is profan'd and expos'd to Contempt, when us'd in a rash or trifling Manner, without any Subserviency to such a valuable End. But,

2. *Common Swearing argues a want of due Reverence towards God in the Mind of the Speaker, and tends to abate it in the Mind of the Hearers.*

For it cannot be easily conceiv'd that that Man's Soul is habituated to awful Apprehensions of so great and terrible a *Majesty*, who can ordinarily allow himself to *trifle* with his fearful and reverend Name, and dare presume upon every *trivial* Occasion to make *rash Appeals* to his *all seeing Eye*, and to his *avenging Justice*. For sure none that has a real and profound Veneration for so adorable a Being, would ever make this use of his Name without holy Trembling and Dread, and without great Deliberation both concerning the Truth of what he speaks, and the just Occasion of interposing him as the Witness of it. What then can we conclude concerning such as dare upon every slight Occasion, make a common By-word of his dreadful Name, such as never scruple to call the sovereign Judge of the whole Earth, to attest and avouch their ordinary Talk, and stand *Guarantee* for the Truth of all their trifling Assertions, but that there is no Fear of him before their *Eyes*, no Sense of his unconceivable Greatness and Glory upon their *Hearts*? How despicable is that Sovereign Majesty in thy Esteem, when thou dar'st with so high a Presumption abuse those sacred Titles of his to rant and bluster with, that should not be mention'd without profound Humility and Dread! Is this such an *Hal-lowing his Glorious Name* as he requires, and thou pretendest so often to pray for, to treat it with less Respect than thou woudest the Name of thy Prince or thy Father, nay, to defile it by making it serve so vile an End, as the venting thy unruly Passion, when ever it prompts thee to rage and storm against thy Fellow-Creatures? Can those be thought to stand in awe of that Blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, who are not afraid to bandy about his adorable Name, as if that were intended to be the common Scorn and Sport of a leud and irreligious Age?

And as this argues such Irreverence towards God in the *Swearer*, so it tends to corrupt the Minds of those that hear him. For they are thereby (so far

as the Swearers Example can influence and infect them) tempted to the same slight Apprehensions of that glorious Majesty, and Contempt of his Omniscience and Justice, that the Swearer evidences by his bold and profane Abuse of his holy Name. So that 'tis no thanks to the *common Swearer*, that those he converses with, retain any Awe of God upon their Minds, when they hear him daily treating him with so open Disrespect and insolent Irreverence.

3. *Common Swearing tends to lessen Men's Reverence of an Oath it self, and consequently to prepare them for the horrid Guilt of Perjury or False-swearing.*

'Tis the Character of a good Man, That he fears an Oath, Eccles. ix. 2. and therefore as he will not needlessly swear at all, so when he must do it, he has the strictest Regard possible to the Truth of what he affirms, or Sincerity of what he promises under such an awful Bond. But now 'tis evident that *common Swearers* are seldom or never very critical in examining the Truth of those ordinary Assertions, which they rashly interpose the Name of God to warrant and confirm. It cannot reasonably be thought they should be so very cautious in all they speak at random, and especially under the Transport of Passion, when of all Times they are prone to *swear the fastest*. So that if once a Man come so far by the habitual Practice of this Sin, as to make no Conscience of using Oaths to attest all that he utters in the heat of Discourse, (when he has neither Leisure nor sufficient Sedateness of Mind, to enquire warily into the Truth of what he saith) he gives us just ground to conclude that he makes little matter of an Oath, since he does upon so small an Occasion run the hazard of *For-swearing himself*. And if a Man can so easily for-swear himself in *Passion*, what Security have we, that he will not do it in *cool Blood*, when he is under a strong Temptation, and hopes his Purjury may pass undiscover'd? For what should in this Case restrain him from it? If it be the natural Reverence of an Oath, and Dread of the Justice of God, as concern'd to avenge all Perjury, sure if these Principles were prevalent and strong in him, they would restrain him from all rash Swearing. For he cannot reasonably pretend to fear an Oath, that ordinarily swears at random; nor can he pretend to be much aw'd with the Apprehensions of God's *avenging Justice*, that so frequently makes such *hasty inconsiderate Appeals* to it. It may be fear'd that he that scruples not the lesser Guilt may venture on the greater, since those Principles are evidently weaken'd in him that should preserve him from it. And doubtless, 'tis very much owing to this Vice of *common Swearing*, that *Perjury* it self has so greatly abounded among us. A Crime, that at once tends utterly to destroy all Reverence of God and Faith among Men. So that if we would not have this Wickedness (which is both the highest Scandal to Religion, and the most pernicious Bane to civil Societies) to grow upon us, that *common Swearing* must be restrain'd, which has so evident a Tendency to prepare Men for it, by turning *solemn Oaths* into *customary Forms of speaking*.

For the Sin of profane Cursing, the malignant Nature and Tendency of it will sufficiently appear in these two Instances.

1. 'Tis a Sin that implies a high degree of *Uncharitableness towards Men*.

For if *Cursers* really mean as they speak, (and what Opinion must we entertain of their Truth and Honesty if they do not?) They imprecate the greatest Mischiefs imaginable to their Fellow-Creatures, as commonly no less than that the Devil may take them, or God may damn them. Now if they are in earnest, what can we take them for but *incarnate Devils*, that so passionately desire the eternal Ruin and Misery of others? For if *Devils* could speak with human Voice, what Language could we expect from those envious Spirits, more suitable to the poisonous Malignity of their Nature than this? And what Injury are any of our

our Fellow-Creatures capable of doing to us, that can any way justify the barbarous Cruelty of such direful Imprecations? Would we indeed have all that cross our Humour or Interest, or offer us the least Indignity and Affront, doom'd for it, to remediless Flames, and to the Vengeance of eternal Fire? This were not only to give way to the worst Passion of human Nature, *Revenge*, but to carry it beyond all Bounds, as if no less than the irreparable Misery of an immortal Soul, could compensate every petty Injury we receive. But if *Cursers* pretend, that they do not mean so ill as they speak, and that their *real* Wishes are not so unmerciful as their *verbal* ones, why then should they affect to talk so like *embodied Fiends*? Why should they suffer their Tongues to be thus set on fire of Hell? Why should they thus habituate them to the proper *Dialect* of the infernal Regions?

And if it be so uncharitable a Thing to curse others, what stupid Barbarity is it for a Man to curse and damn himself: This is such an Instance of Wickedness as we can scarce think of without Astonishment, so that were Men supposed serious in such Imprecations, we must conclude that they are passionately desirous of their own endless Destruction, and impatient for the Execution of it. So that did we not see the contrary, we should be strongly tempted to think such Persons to be under the Power of *Distraction* and *Frenzy*. But alas, we find by the use of their Reason in other Matters, 'tis only a *voluntary Frenzy*, a *Madness*, that their atheistical Temper, and their outrageous Passions are the only Causes of.

2. *Profane Cursing expresses a very insolent Contempt of the great God.*

I know indeed many use such *Curses* against others, as *Words of Course* to express their Passion by. And therefore would be ready to think we wrong them if we should suppose their inward *Intensions* as *uncharitable* as their *Expressions*. And perhaps it may be reasonably thought, that few of those have arriv'd to such a height of diabolical Malice, who yet too commonly use this hellish Language. But what Apology then can such Persons make, for their bold abuse of the vindictive Justice of God, when by their Curses they make such rash and senseless Addresses to it, to execute the Dictates of their unruly Passion and Rage? As if the *Vengeance* of the universal Sovereign and Judge of the whole Earth were to be at our beck, to accomplish every wicked Imprecation that our Anger or Malice prompts us to utter! Can we imagine the Hearts of those to be possess'd with any deep Veneration for that great and terrible Majesty, who can find nothing else to trifle with, or vent their hasty Passion by, but his *tremendous vindictive Righteousness*, and his *final Sentence of eternal Damnation*? For sure if we either consider'd or believ'd what these Things mean, we should not dare to play with those edged Tools, nor with that *Fool* (mention'd *Prov. xxvi. 18.*) cast forth *Firebrands, Arrows, and Death*, and then pretend we are but in *Sport* or in *Passion*. This is plainly to affront that very Attribute of God, which above all others claims our profoundest Dread, and should rather strike us with Terror and Trembling.

And for the Sin of Men's *cursing themselves*, it argues an almost incredible Contempt of the divine Vengeance. So that were not our Ears often grated with this Language, it could scarce be thought that any could arrive to such a pitch of desperate and daring Impiety. For these Curses are such a bold and open *Defiance* of the glorious Majesty of Heaven, as we may well question whether *Devils* themselves are guilty of. For they are said to *believe and tremble*, *Jam. ii. 19.* They are represented as *beseeking* our Saviour that he would not torment them before the Time, *Matt. viii. 29.* *Luke viii. 28.* Whereas the more *insolent* and *fearless* Sinners of our Age, do with an unheard of Impudence challenge the *Justice* of God, as if it were too slow in its Execution, and call for their own *Damnation*, as if it were too long a coming.

What though they pretend they do not wish it in good earnest? Should they give a righteous God so great Provocation to take them at their Word, and fulfil their bold Imprecation? Can they find nothing to trifle with and abuse but his *tremendous Vengeance*? Nothing to sport with but *Hell and Damnation*? Should not such *guilty* Creatures rather tremble at the Thoughts of the *living* God, and dread to fall into his *avenging Hands*? Should such *dry Stubble* thus provoke or play with the *consuming Fire*? *Heb. xii. ult.* Is he the everlasting King and Judge, at whose *Wrath the Earth trembles*, and the *Nations are not able to abide his Indignation*, and shall every despicable Criminal and Malefactor, with a desperate Madness, thus dare his Almighty Power, and challenge his vindictive Arm, thus stretch out his Hand against God, and strengthen himself against the Almighty; thus run upon him, even upon his Neck, and upon the thick Bosses of his Buckler? (To use the elegant Expressions of *Eliphaz*, *Job xv. 25, 26.*) How monstrous and amazing Impiety and Folly is this? But,

Thirdly, I proceed to argue against these Vices from the awful Threats of God denounc'd against them.

And as both these Sins (if we will allow the third Precept of the Decalogue that Latitude and Extent that our Saviour's Exposition gives it) are a taking God's holy Name in vain, i. e. a very presumptuous irreverent Abuse of it, so there is a very terrible Threatning annex against the Breakers of it, *The Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his Name in vain*, *Exod. xx. 7. i. e.* He will vindicate the Glory of his sacred Name, by severely punishing those that treat it with such profane Indignity and Contempt. And agreeably hereto the Apostle *James* enforces this Caution, not to swear at all, with this Argument, *Least you fall into Condemnation*, *James v. 12.* (For so most Copies read it, tho' if we should read it (as some do) *eis upokrisin*, least you fall into Hypocrisy, it will confirm the Argument against common Swearing, from its Tendency to involve Men in the Guilt of *Perjury*.) Thus to have our Mouths full of *Cursing and Bitterness*, is one of those Sins that render Men *obnoxious to the Vengeance of God*, *Rom. iii. 14.* compar'd with *ver. 19.* And our Saviour plainly intimates to us, That except in this point of Swearing, our *Righteousness* exceed that of the *Scribes and Pharisees*, (tho' they allow'd only common Swearing by Creatures) we cannot enter into the Kingdom of God, *Matt. v. 20.* And as these general Threatnings give all common Swearers and Cursers so just reason to fear the same eternal Vengeance and Wrath that's now reveal'd from Heaven against all Ungodliness of Men, (and consequently against these palpable Instances of it) *Rom. i. 18.* So other Passages of Scripture plainly imply these Sins to be among the Number of those crying Provocations, that usually draw down temporal Judgments, and even publick ones, where they generally abound and reign uncontroll'd. Thus *Hos. iv. 2, 3.* In the Catalogue of those Vices for which the Land is said to mourn (i. e. through the dismal Calamities they entail upon it) Swearing leads the Van, and is follow'd by *Lying, Killing, Theft, and Adultery*. (Crimes of the first Magnitude.) To the same purpose we read, *Jer. xxiii. 10.* Because of Swearing (or as your Margin reads it, *Cursing*) the Land mourns. Thus the flying Roll of the Prophet *Zachary*, full of *Curses*, is levell'd against the Swearer in general, as well as the False Swearer, bringing with it a fatal Consumption on his very House and Family; as if a righteous God was resolv'd to rase their Name out of this Earth, that so pollute and dishonour his, *Zech. v. 2, 3, 4, 5.*

I come now in the

Fourth and last place, To argue against these Sins from the Weakness and Folly of those Pretences that are alledg'd, to excuse and extenuate them.

It has been often and justly objected against profane Swearing, that no Man has any shew of Temptation to it. In other Crimes the Devil proposes some specious Bait, some sensual Pleasure or worldly Advantage.

And though this will no way justify our known Violation of any Laws of God, who proposes Arguments to countervail these of infinitely higher Moment, yet a Man's being drawn to sin chiefly by such Allurements, seems at least to argue, that he chooses the Sin principally for the *Gain* and the *Pleasure's* sake. That he is not acted by meer Contempt of the Authority of God; and would not have transgress'd his Commands, if they had not interfer'd with his secular Profit, or sensual Delight. But though this be in it self a very sorry Pretence, and a small Extenuation of a Man's Guilt, yet even this is more than the common Swearer can say for himself. He cannot pretend that he *pleases his Senses or Appetites* by thus wounding his Conscience. His numerous Oaths increase no other Treasures but those of *divine Wrath*. No Passion of human Nature seems gratify'd by this Sin, unless it be a wretched Malignity and Despight against the blessed God himself. So that the common Swearer, of all Men, seems to serve the Devil for nought, and to be wicked for meer Wickedness sake.

And what is so justly said of *profane Swearing*, may be in a great Measure apply'd to *Cursing* too. For Men cannot pretend to gratify any other Passion by it, but that of *Revenge*; and they are so far from attaining this End, that their Curses usually return on their own Heads, and like a *recoiling Gun*, only wound and mischieve those that let it off.

But since these Vices are practis'd by many that pretend to *Wit* and *Sense*, we should perhaps affront their Judgment if we should suppose they had nothing to say for themselves. And therefore it will be here requisite to take notice of such *Pleas* or *Excuses* as they usually offer. And,

First, some alledge, That they rarely swear or curse but when they are in *Passion*, and in that Case they find it hard to forbear, and hope their *Passion* will at least very much excuse their Fault.

To shew the Vanity of this Pretence, I shall only suggest the following Particulars.

1. Such Anger it self, if it exceed the Bounds prescrib'd by the Law of God, is very sinful; and much more when it transports a Man to such Instances of Profaneness and Impiety as these. If he that calls a Man Fool in *Passion* be in danger of *Hell-fire*, Matt. v. 23. what is he that furiously damns him to the Pit of *Hell* it self? So that *Passion* is no better Excuse for Swearing and Cursing, than 'tis for the Murders which so many commit in the heat of Blood. As nothing will satisfy such Murderers upon every slight Injury but the Blood of him that has done it, so nothing will satisfy the Curser but his Damnation.

2. Whatever Temptation Injuries may give us in our *Passion* to curse those that do them, they cannot be pretended as any Temptation to profane Swearing.

Suppose that thy *Fellow-Creature* has offer'd thee never so great an Affront, which thy *Passion* prompts thee to revenge, is that any tolerable Plea why thou should'st execute that *Revenge* upon thy *Maker*? Is it he that has done thee harm? Is it against him thou art incens'd? Or hast thou no better way to retaliate the Wrongs of thy *Enemy*, than by doing a far greater Injury to the *Author* of thy Being, and the great Benefactor of thy Life? Are their Provocations any Ground for thy tearing and defiling his sacred Name, by whose Power thou art every Moment preserv'd, and on whose daily Care, and innumerable Benefits, thy Life it self, and the continued Comfort thereof, depends? How senselessly dost thou pursue thy *Revenge*, when to vent thy Indignation against him that has done thee some (perhaps inconsiderable) Evil, thou flyest in the Face of thy best Friend, and offerest the vilest Indignity to him, that has done thee the greatest Good? This sure is such an Instance of stupid Folly and Madness, as can hardly be parallel'd.

3. No Provocation can justify our Cursing those that offer it.

For all Curses are but the Gratification of that pri-

vate *Revenge* which the divine Law has strictly forbidden. And indeed a Propensity thereto, is one of the most noted Lineaments of the *Devil's Image* upon us, and most opposite to that Goodness which is the brightest Part of the amiable Image of God. 'Tis the Character of his Children, to love their Enemies, to bless those that curse them, and to pray for those that despitefully use and persecute them. Whereas to wish Evil to others, as well as to do it to them, are Passions that are only kindled from the Fire of Hell. And how unreasonable are the Wishes themselves, considering the Smallness of the Occasion? Another has given thee ill Words, or done thee some petty Injury, or perhaps only cross'd thy unreasonable Humour, and for this, thou desirest he may fall under the direful Curse of God, and be damn'd to endless Misery. Is there any thing but monstrous Uncharitableness and devilish Spite in such Wishes? Or if thou pretendest that thou dost not really desire it, but only speakest such Words to express thy deep Resentment of the Injury receiv'd, hast thou no other way to make thy *Fellow-Creature* sensible of the Wrong he has done, but such rash Addresses to the terrible Vengeance of God? Canst thou find nothing for thy *Passion* to abuse but his tremendous Judgments? Will no Language serve thee to vent thy Displeasure in, but such as is fitter for an incarnate Fiend than a profess'd Christian? Nay, since thy rash Curses can do no harm to those they are darted against, but do truly arm the Vengeance of God against thy self, whilst thou really hazard thy own Damnation, meerly for the Satisfaction of thy *Revenge*, in vainly wishing theirs? And for Men's Cursing themselves, 'tis a yet more amazing height of Folly, because others have done us a small Wrong to wish our own eternal Ruin, and give the Justice of God the highest Provocation to execute it.

Secondly, Others pretend, That there's no way so proper for them to keep their Inferiors in awe, as by such Language as this. That a saucy Servant, or bold Clown, can no way be so easily humbled and frightned into his Duty, as by a volley of Oaths and Curses, and will scarce think a Man in good earnest offended with him, unless he swear and damn.

To this Pretence I shall only say these two Things.

1. This is no more than a bare Pretence. There are Thousands in the World, that know well enough how to keep their Inferiors in due Awe and Subjection, without any such unhallowed Arts of Government. And those that will not be frightned with the grave Threats and Frowns, of such as have a just Right to chastize their Insolence, will as flily stand the Shock of an empty peal of Oaths and Curses. Whereas if they find that a Superior punctually makes his Threats good, they will as readily believe them for the future as if he swore to them.

2. As this is but a meer Pretence, so 'tis a very unreasonable and senseless one.

Is it a matter of such Concern to keep thy Inferiors in awe, that thou should'st scruple no means that tend to it? To treat them with extravagant *Passion*, or barbarous Severity, would as effectually do it. But would the attaining of that End excuse the Use of such inhuman Means? How much less then will it excuse thy blasphemous Insolence against God? Hast thou no other way to make others stand in Fear of thee, than by assuming the Character of the unjust Judge, who neither feared God, nor regarded Man? Luke xviii. 2. Canst thou find no better Expedient to prevent the Affronts of others, than by offering thy self the most daring Indignities unto the Majesty of Heaven? Must nothing but his adorable Name serve thee to hector and rant with? Is there no way of perswading others that thou art angry with them, but by calling on him to damn them, as if his impartial Justice were at the Call and Command of every such wild Fury as thy self?

Thirdly, Others pretend, That they have no other end in Swearing and Cursing, but to perswade others of the Truth of what they say.

Answer,

Answer 1. *This can justify no Oaths but what we use on solemn Occasions, where some important but doubted Truth needs to be confirm'd by human Testimony. And in such Cases solemn Appeals to God by Oaths are allowable.*

2. *Oaths ordinarily us'd in common Conversation, are no proper Means to attain any such End, as the giving Credit to our Assertions. If thou art a Man of known Veracity and Truth, such Oaths are in ordinary Converse altogether needless, and thy bare Affirmation will be sufficient without them. Why then should'st thou call thy own Honesty into question, by acting as if thou supposed'st that no Man will believe thy bare Word without thy Oath to confirm it? But if thy Veracity be really doubted by those thou conversest with, thy rash multiply'd Oaths will signify little to remove their Suspicion. For those with whom Swearing is a customary Thing, and Oaths but Words of course, no wise Man will ever lay a greater Stress upon them, than upon their naked Assertions. For he that scarce speaks without an Oath, if he be given to Lying, is as prone to swear when he speaks false, as when he speaks true, and indeed ordinarily scarce observes or considers when he swears and when he does not. Nay,*

3. *Customary Swearing rather deserves and crosses this very End that is pretended to excuse it.*

For Swearing and Lying are so nearly ally'd, and so seldom separated, that he that will do the one, it may be strongly presum'd he will not much scruple the other. What can give us a probable Ground to conclude a Man's Veracity but this, *That he seems to have the Fear of God before his Eyes.* So that if a Man appear devoid of that, we have little Security of the Truth of what he says. And what can give us a juster Suspicion of that, than that he has no Fear of an Oath, and no Reverence for the sacred Name of God? And Mankind have generally so true a Sense of this, that with all, but a few weak and silly People, the more a Man swears the less he is believ'd, and his very multiply'd rash Oaths raise a Suspicion of the Truth of what he speaks, when there is scarce any other Ground for it.

Fourthly, Others pretend, *that they have got such a Custom of Swearing that they cannot leave it.*

To this Plea I shall only give this brief Reply.

1. *If Men should alledge the same Pretence for other Sins, they would easily see the Folly of it.*

So has many a Drunkard an untoward inveterate Custom of making a Beast of himself. Many a Thief can hardly forbear Pilfering when he has a tempting Opportunity. Many are so habituated to Lying, that they can scarce tell when they do it. And some Mens brutal Lusts seem to hurry them with an uncontroll'd Violence. But sure this is thought in all other Cases a horrible Aggravation of Men's Sins, because it shews that they have by long Practice so stupify'd their Consciences, that they make little or no Resistance against Temptations, being now become fear'd and past feeling. And shall that then be thought to excuse the Guilt of Swearers, that heightens the Guilt of all other Sinners? How comes this Dialect of Hell to be so familiar to thee, but by the frequent indulg'd Use of it? And does that abate the Crime, and render it less heinous and detestable?

2. *Men are under no greater Inability to leave this Sin than others.*

'Tis a plain Evidence, that Mens Pretences that they cannot forbear, are but unreasonable, when the most desperate Swearer can refrain in Company that he stands in any awe of. The very fear of the Penalty has already laid a considerable Restraint on this Vice. And if Men would once use their considering Powers, should not the Fear of God do as much to curb them as the Fear of Men? Besides the Grace of God is not wanting to sincere Endeavours. He that calls us to Repentance for this and all other Sins, can upon our humble Application to him, give us Strength to perform our serious Purposes of it.

3. *If thou canst not leave this wretched habit of Swearing and Cursing, there's no remedy but to suffer the Vengeance denounc'd against such Sins.*

Is it customary to thee to swear and damn, so is it customary with a righteous God to avenge such Abuse of his holy Name, and Contempt of his terrible Justice. If thou canst not reform thy Practice, so neither can he repent of his dreadful Threatnings. If thy inveterate Wickedness lay thee under such a Necessity of going on to sin, so will his inflexible Justice lay him under a Necessity of punishing such incorrigible Sinners. But sure 'tis far easier for thee to change thy Temper and Practice, than for a just God to change his own Nature, or to falsify the Truth of his Word.

Fifthly, Some pretend, *That Swearing is so much in Fashion, that they should be ridicul'd as precise and singular if they scrupled it.*

To this I would only reply,

1. *If Swearing be in Fashion, 'tis so far from being a Mode peculiar to Persons of Quality and Birth, that 'tis rather most us'd by the very Scum of Mankind.*

In this point of Breeding, a Porter or Coachman can vie with a Gentleman or Lord, and the meanest Centinel or Tarpaulin equal the most buffing Officer. And indeed 'tis so far from adding any real Grace or Decency to Men's Language, that nothing usually renders Men's Discourses more fortish and senseless, more rude and ill-manner'd than the Oaths and Curses wherewith they lard it. So that were it not for grating upon the Ears of devout People, nothing could do more to put Men out of Countenance with their hellish Language, than to repeat it to them. The Reader may see an Instance hereof in the late ingenious Author of the *Essays upon Projects*. For I am loth to defile this Paper with so abominable Stuff.

2. *If it be in Fashion to swear and curse, it must needs be accounted a very odious one, to all that have not quite rais'd all Sense of Piety out of their Minds.*

For nothing can ever make Swearing and Damning pass justly for a piece of good Breeding, till we can persuade the World, 'tis a piece of commendable Gallantry to despise and defy the Deity, and that to be a Rebel against the Laws of Heaven, is the truest Badge of Honour upon Earth. So that 'till profess'd Atheism come in vogue, and Vice be capable of ennobling a Man's Blood, these Instances of Profaneness will never pass for Marks of Gentility, and to be a Swearer and Curser will never be reckon'd among Men's Titles of Honour.

3. *Let these Vices be never so common, no Man should swear and curse for Company, that is not content to be damned for Company too.*

If Men must needs go with a Multitude to do Evil, they know whither the broad Way will lead them. But sure 'tis much better to hazard the Reproach of being singular and precise, than out of Compliance with so detestable a Fashion, to venture upon perishing for ever. 'Tis too great a Complaisance to a lewd Age to go to Hell with them, and that for nothing.

Lastly, Some may possibly pretend, *That they at least may be allow'd to swear and curse, because they believe neither God nor Devil, neither Heaven nor Hell.*

I must confess this is the most specious Plea that can be alledg'd for such Practices. For he that believes no God, has some Pretence to make bold with what he takes to be an empty Name. He has no Fear of divine Justice to restrain him from an insolent Defiance of it. His Actions and his Principles are both of a Piece. And yet even to such I would suggest what is sufficient to dissuade them from Swearing and Cursing. For,

1. *This Pretence cannot excuse these Vices from Rudeness and ill Manners.*

There is no Man that pretends to the Education of a Gentleman, but will think it highly uncivil without the least Provocation, to abuse any the Company has a great Respect for. Sure then that good Breeding it self, which Atheistical Persons sometimes boast

of, should restrain them from wounding the Ears of those that believe and reverence a Deity, with such profane Abuse of his adored Name. Especially when thereby they violate the publick Laws, and affront the Authority of the Nation. 'Tis a great Indecency to treat with Contempt, what the generality of Mankind pay the highest Veneration to. And if every Loyal Subject resent it as a great Provocation to hear his Prince abus'd and vilify'd, they cannot imagine it a less Offence to every good Man, to hear that blessed Being treated with such open Indignity, to whom he bears the highest Reverence and Affection. And indeed, in what pious Soul would it not raise just Horror and Indignation to hear that eternal Majesty, whom Angels adore, and before whom Devils tremble, made the May-game and Scorn of every irreligious and leud Buffoon?

2. *Even Interest it self should restrain Atheistical Persons from these Vices.*

For 'tis certain they get nothing by them. The Age is not yet so degenerate, that meer Damning will qualify a Man for Preferment. And the most brutish Epicure might enjoy all his beloved Pleasures, and never miss that of Swearing. Now if there be no Advantage to be had by these Sins, 'tis much safer to let them alone. For after all the Confidence of Atheists, 'tis possible there may be a God and a Life to come. So that if their great Confidence should in this Point deceive them, (as most certainly it will) they will find that their Oaths and Curses will but increase the Score of their Guilt, and render the Sight of their incensed Judge more unsupportable to them. For among all their other Sins, (as I have already suggested) they will find no shadow of Excuse for these. And indeed no Man should commit them, but he who is willing to run the hazard of Damnation for the meer Pleasure of being wicked.

I shall only to these Arguments, which are more directly suited to professed Christians, subjoin the Judgment of the more sober Heathens in reference to the Sin of Swearing, if possible, to shame them out of it. Plato in his Book *de Legibus* mentions it as a commendable Institution, That none should pollute the Names of the Gods by a slight customary Mention of them. Hierocles recommends Swearing rarely, as necessary to preserve the due Reverence of an Oath, and speaks of common Swearing, as the high Road to Perjury. Quintilian tells us, a grave Man should not swear except in cases of Necessity. And Epictetus advises, if possible, to avoid it. Isocrates allows Oaths only in two Cases, either to vindicate one's Innocence, or to save one's Self, or Friends from unjust Punishment. And sure such strict Maxims deliver'd by Pagan Moralists, should make the very Blood rise in the Face of those pretended Christians, who fall so far short of their excellent Rules, and much more of those of our blessed Saviour. For if we that enjoy the Light of so glorious and clear a Revelation, do not practise what the very Light of Nature dictates, even Pagans will rise up in Judgment against us, to reproach and condemn us.

And now I would intreat the Swearers and Cursers of the Age, (if they have not quite extinguish'd their Power of thinking) seriously to consider these plain Arguments, in which they will find no rhetorical Aggravations, but a naked Representation of these Vices in their native but ugly Hue. Which if they would impartially do, one would hope, unless they have quite abandon'd their Reason, they cannot withstand the Evidence of Truth in them, nor go on in these wretched Practices, without offering as ungrateful Violence to their own Consciences, as their profane Language has long done to the Ears of all good Men.

Having dispatch'd this first Head, I come,

II. *To offer something for exciting both Magistrates and private Persons to their Duty, in order to the suppressing these Vices, by the effectual Execution of the Law lately made against them.*

I begin with Magistrates. I know indeed the Pe-

nalty which the Act it self lays on the Justices of Peace, in case they fail of their Duty in executing it, may seem to make it needless to urge them to it. Yet since all Magistrates may do much to promote the design of this Act, by encouraging Informations, by concealing the Name of the Informer, (where the Discovery of it is no way necessary, nor can be legally demanded) and by severely punishing any Revenge that convicted Persons may execute on others for informing against them, I shall only briefly suggest a few Considerations to them.

1. *Your Zeal for the Honour of Almighty God should prompt you to do your utmost for the Suppression of these Vices.*

You all pretend to make this one Design of your publick Administrations. The great God puts an eminent Opportunity into your Hands, to manifest the Sincerity of your Pretensions. If then you have any devout and affectionate Veneration for that Blessed and only Potentate, any real Concern for his Honour and for the uncontested Interest of Religion, you have now a fair Occasion to shew it. And if you improve it not, God and all good Men will join in condemning your inexcusable Luke-warmness in so just and glorious a Cause.

2. *Your Regard to the publick Safety should also engage you to it.*

You oft pretend a mighty Zeal for the Publick Good. Now what can you do more likely to subserve that truly valuable End, than by stopping that Torrent of Impiety and Profaneness, that is otherwise like to overflow us again with new and heavier Calamities?

I doubt not but all good Men are fully perswaded, that our relapsing into these and other Vices, has had a great Influence on the prolonging the Successes and Triumphs of our Enemies, and the retarding our happy Settlement. So that our Hopes of a more favourable Providence, to make a happy Change in the Scene of our publick Affairs, chiefly depend on the Success of these Attempts of a necessary and general Reformation. And those will do the truest Service to their Country, that are most instrumental and active in promoting it.

3. *Your Concern for your own final Account should effectually excite you to it.*

As you profess ultimately to derive your Authority from God the Universal Sovereign, and Fountain of all civil Power, so you own your selves accountable to him. Should you not then seriously think how the great Judge of the Earth will resent it, if you trifle with so great an Advantage, for vindicating and repairing his injured Honour, and for restoring the Veneration due to his sacred Name? And on the contrary; How highly he will approve of your Fidelity, if you now answer your Character by being a Terror to Evil-doers: If by the Awe of your just Authority, you force insolent Profaneness and Iniquity to stop its Mouth, and cast as open Contempt on these detestable Vices, as they have done upon the Glory of God: Let not the Guilt of these publick Crimes lye any longer at your Door, by your connivance at them, or the slackness of your Endeavours to restrain them.

But I would chiefly address my self to private Persons. For since you are so much concern'd, and are so necessary Instruments in the Execution of this Law, it will be needful to excite you to your Duty. And the rather, because whereas the Law it self obliges the Magistrate to do his Part, 'tis only Conscience and a sincere Regard to the Glory of God that can excite you to do yours. And to engage you to it, I shall briefly suggest to you the following Particulars.

1. *'Tis your undoubted Duty to contribute your Endeavours towards the Suppression of these detestable Vices.*

You can no more question this, than you can your Obligations to advance the Glory of God, and promote a publick Reformation, so far as your private Sphere gives you fit Opportunities for it. Those did but perform their necessary Duty, that declar'd to

Moses the Blasphemy of the Son of Shelomith, Levit. xxiv. 11. Nor those that found out and convicted Idolaters, Deut. xvii. 4, 5. And there are Multitudes of private Persons, that can never expect a more eminent Advantage of publick Usefulness to be put into their Hands. So that their Sloth will be inexcusable, if they make no Improvement of so valuable a Talent. And sure in the present Contest between the Kingdom of God and that of Satan, between the Interest of Piety and Vertue, and that of Profaneness and Vice, no good Man ought to stand Neuter, and think himself unconcern'd which prevails. Such a clear Cause requires and will justify our forward Zeal, and here Luke-warmness and Indifferency are truly detestable.

2. Without your Endeavours, the Design of this Law (viz. the Suppressing these Vices) is like to be frustrated, and the Guilt thereof will in this Case lye much upon your selves. For without Informations there can be no Convictions and Forfeitures, and consequently Offenders will go on in bold Defiance, both to the Laws of God and Man. So that if you shrink and give back, if you desist from your Endeavours, from the consideration of the small Trouble and Hazard of them, the declining Cause of Profaneness will again bear up its Head, and endanger the overflowing the Land with a more irresistible Violence than it did before. You have now the fairest Opportunity put into your Hands, of promoting a publick Reformation, so that if you improve it not, the Guilt of other Men's Sin will be in a great Measure charg'd upon you. And will you, that have so often seem'd to pray so earnestly for the Suppression of these Vices, decline so necessary Endeavours to farther it? Shall so glorious and so blessed a Work sink, through your Luke-warmness and Indifferency in it? Do you pretend to lament these abominable Crimes, and will you not do what is so evidently in your Power towards the Crushing of them? Shall the leud Swearers of the Age be more zealous to profane, than you to keep up the Reverence of God's Holy Name?

3. There is a happy Prospect of Success in your Endeavours.

For if once Informations become general, by every good Man's combining to do his part, Offenders will have no hope of Impunity. And Experience does already sufficiently tell us, that how fond soever Men are of Swearing, yet they are loth to pay for it; so that we may hope in time, they will rather part with their Oaths than with their Money. Nay, we see that how insolent soever these Sinners seem in out-braving the Justice of God, yet they are wonderfully appal'd, and hang down their Heads, when a Constable surprizes them with a Warrant upon a second or third Conviction. And how much soever they were wont to glory in this Vice, they do not take it for any great Honour, to have their Names on publick Record in the black Roll. In this Capital City Oaths are in a great Measure silenc'd in the Streets, and seek shelter in the Taverns and Ale-houses, nor are they altogether safe there. So that if you will but generally concur with unanimous Zeal in giving in Informations, there is little doubt but the Fear of the Penalty will with the most effect what no other Arguments cou'd hitherto do. And I hope your Attempts in this City will set a Pattern, that will in a little time influence other Parts of the Kingdom, and make the Reformation universal.

4. You have no ground to be either asham'd or afraid in so necessary and commendable a Service to God, and to the Interest of Religion.

In this honourable Cause, that Name of an Informer which in most other Cases has justly so ill a Sound, is far from being any Mark of Reproach. For Offenders themselves, if they would speak impartially, cannot but own your Practice to be free from any Suspicion of mean and base Ends. For what should incite a Man without the least Prospect of any Advantage to himself, nay, with a certain Prospect of some Trouble

and Danger, to do so unwelcome an Office, and so likely to disoblige those whom he would reform, but a sincere Zeal for the Honour of God, and for the Observance of his Laws? They cannot reasonably suppose you are act'd with any other Spite and Malice, than a very just and laudable one against Profaneness and Irreligion. Nay, should those you inform against, be so unreasonable as to misinterpret and censure your Zeal, sure the Approbation of the great God and of all good Men, should sufficiently counterballance their groundless Reproaches and Calumnies. And it will be found in the great Day of Trial, a greater Honour to have been a faithful Informer against Vice, than a base Conniver at it, and a wretched Betrayer of the Honour of God and Religion.

Nor should you be discourag'd by the Hazard you run, of exposing your selves to the Malice or Revenge of Offenders. If Magistrates would but as generally encourage Informations, by refusing to discover the Informer's Name without just Cause (as some few to their great Honour have done) this Difficulty would be in a great Measure remov'd. But however that be, you have the Protection of the Laws, as a Security against the Injuries of any enrag'd Offenders, and I doubt not the Government would punish them with a just Severity. But 'tis a far more considerable Encouragement, that you may expect the Protection of the great God, whose Cause you herein so signally espouse. And shou'd your Zeal for his Honour expose you to any present Disadvantage, he can easily make it up in temporal Blessings, and will do it abundantly with eternal Rewards. And sure we are not the real Disciples of Christ, if every appearance of Difficulties can deter us from so evident a Duty, if we dare baulk so signal a piece of Service, meerly because we cannot do it without some Self-denial and Hazard.

And if upon such Considerations you resolve upon the faithful Discharge of your Duty, it will be easy to find out the most proper Method of doing it. There are many in this City engag'd in that excellent Work, to whom you may adjoyn your selves. And indeed if every Parish had stated and select Consults, they might carry on this great and pious Design with greater Regularity, Order and Success, by their mutual Advice and Resolution.

It remains now,

III. To enquire into the Grounds of those loud Complaints lately made against private Informations.

'Tis evident, That the Act against Swearing does no way require that the Offender should be present, when the Information is given against him. Nor does any Clause in it oblige the Justices of the Peace to discover the Informer's Name, when the Offender does not dispute the matter of Fact. So that there is no pretence of this Method (of receiving private Informations upon Oath, and concealing the Informer's Name when there's no just Cause of declaring it) being any way opposite to the Design of this Act, and 'tis evident on the contrary, that it highly tends to promote the great End of it.

But since there are several Objections rais'd against it, I shall briefly consider the most material I have yet met with.

1. Some alledge, That 'tis contrary to natural Justice and Equity, and to the Course of the Law in other Cases, that a Man should be convicted and punish'd for a Crime, without having his Accuser brought Face to Face, at least without so much as knowing who he is.

Answer, This Objection cou'd indeed admit of no Reply, if the accused Person, even when he complains of being wrong'd, cou'd no way know who his Accuser is, and were debarr'd from the Privilege both of defending his Innocence, and prosecuting the Accuser. But I suppose there is no such Thing practis'd. For no Justices of the Peace deny any Person the Knowledge of the Informer's Name, if the Person accus'd insist upon his Innocence, and engage to prosecute the Informer for Perjury, in what he has

has sworn against him. But if the Person accus'd desire to know the Informer's Name upon any other Terms, 'tis reasonable to suppose, that he desires it only to have the Opportunity of executing his private Revenge upon him. At least there is no just Cause to discover the Informer's Name, unless the accused Person solemnly declare (and if required do it upon Oath) that he knows the Information to be false, and in that Case, I suppose, no Justice of Peace will conceal the Informer's Name, nor any honest Informer desire it.

Others object, That this Method of private Informations exposes a Man to the Malice of any who will but venture to perjure themselves, to do him a Mischief. And it seems to give Encouragement to such Malice, when Persons may hope to give in false Informations undiscover'd.

Ans. 'Tis not reasonable to suppose that any Man will perjure himself, in order to the Convicting another, when he can thereby do him so very little Injury. And this is the more unlikely ever to happen, when such a false Informer runs so great Hazard of being found guilty of Perjury, and being severely punish'd for it. For there is no Man that is conscious of his own Innocence, but would prosecute such a perjurd Person to the utmost, and if he engage to do so, he may know his Name.

If it be reply'd, That if a false Informer positively persist in his Accusation, and the Person accus'd have no Witness or other Evidence to oppose thereto, he seems left without Remedy.

To this I need only answer; This Objection concerns the Act it self, and not this particular Manner of executing it. The Law-makers for the more effectual Suppression of these Vices, have made the Information upon Oath of one Witness sufficient to convict an Offender, because they suppos'd no Man would falsely, upon Oath, accuse another of such a Crime, that has no Hope to reap any Advantage from the Penalty. Especially when a perjurd Informer runs so great Hazard of being detected, as will in all probability deter him from this dangerous way of executing so poor a Revenge, since his Perjury can expose the accused Person to very small Damage, in comparison of the Punishment he runs the risk of, if the Accuser should clear his Innocence.

Others object, That this way of clandestine Informations is very unfair and dishonourable. 'Tis like stabbing a Man behind his Back. Whereas the Informer should in civility first caution the Offender, and try what a gentle Admonition will do, before he use this rougher Method of reforming him. At least he should have the Courage to avow what he does, and not do it in so sneaking and clandestine a way.

Ans. 1. If the Informer be well acquainted with the Offender, it may be very advisable, first to try this gentler way of Admonition and Reproof.

2. But as this Act is chiefly design'd for the reclaiming of common Swearers, and 'tis those generally that fall under the Lash of it, so it may be reasonably presump'd, that such are past the Hope of being reform'd by meer good Advice, and are sensible of no other Argument, but what touches their Interest; and the Law gives them sufficient warning of the Danger they run, in respect of that, by these Crimes.

3. 'Tis not because Informers are ashamed of what they do, that they desire to pass undiscover'd, but because they would obviate several Inconveniences that such Discovery of their Names would occasion, to the real Disadvantage of the Act it self, as well as to their own particular Prejudice. (Of which I shall have occasion to make some Mention in what follows.)

And as I can discern no solid Weight in these Objections against concealing the Informers Name, so on the other hand, 'tis undeniably evident, that this Method is every way most conducive to attain the Design of the Act, by the entire Suppression of these abominable Vices. For,

1. This Method will greatly encourage those to give in Informations, who are truly act'd therein by meer Zeal for the Honour of Almighty God, and the Interest of true Piety.

For as such will be very careful to give in none but true Informations, of which the accused Persons may easily upon Reflexion be conscious to themselves; so they will be under no Temptation to be disheartened from their Duty by the Fear of Revenge or ill Will, when they know that those they accuse cannot learn their Names, without obliging themselves to prosecute them for Perjury, which they may well suppose they will never attempt when incapable of proving it.

2. The Discovery of the Informer's Name will be attended with great Inconveniences to him, to the obstructing the Design of the Act, without any real considerable Advantage to the Party accused.

If the Informer's Name be constantly discover'd, he is thereby needlessly expos'd to the Malice and Revenge of the Offender, to whom he intends thereby a real Service. So that in all probability, he will make the most of those he convicts, his Enemies; however he do truly herein act the Part of a sincere Friend to them. And no doubt the Prospect of this will greatly discourage many from doing their Duty, and render others too slack and cold in it. And if once Informations be discourag'd, the Terror of the Penalty will be over, and the Act gradually lose its Force, and these insolent Sinners as daringly out-brave the Law of Man, as they have hitherto done the Law of God. So that we may soon expect, that these pernicious Vices will, like a Torrent that has broke down a weak Dike, return upon us with a more irresistible Violence.

And these Inconveniences to the Informer are attended with no real considerable Advantage to the accused Party; unless we take it for an Advantage, that by discouraging Informations, these Offenders may sin with greater hope of Impunity. (Which is the very Mischief which the Act is design'd to obviate). For if the Information be true, what is the Offender the better for knowing who gives it? He may thereby indeed understand whom to level his Spite against; or he may know whose Company he should shun, or stand on his Guard in; and so prevent a new Conviction, by taking care to swear only in such Company where he may do it safely. But if the Information be false, the Person accused is not deny'd the Satisfaction of knowing whom to prosecute as perjurd for giving it, if he will engage to do it.

I shall only add, that I hope what I have here suggested, will not tempt the Swearers and Cursers of the Age to conclude, that if this Method of private Informations were lay'd aside, they should go unpunish'd. For I doubt not they will find so many inspir'd with Zeal in so just a Cause, as will soon convince them, these Vices shall not escape the Penalty of the Law for want of open Informations. However some timorous and luke-warm Persons may decline their Duty, there are others that are more justly afraid of being accessary to their Guilt, by concealing it, and conniving at it.

Upon the whole, If now both Magistrates and private Persons would but heartily join their Endeavours; the latter by faithfully giving, and the former by prudently encouraging and countenancing Informations, we may hope to see these crying Impieties of the Age effectually suppress'd, that have been so long the Scandal and Bane of our holy Religion, and the fruitful Source of our publick Calamities. Whereas if Magistrates discourage and frown upon Informers, and their Zeal decline in giving Evidence against Offenders, we may justly fear these heinous Provocations will revive, and rise to as desperate a Height as ever, and in despite of the Law, reign as uncontrol'd as before. And what can we reasonably conclude from thence, but that such

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each renewed Profanation of the holy Name, and Defiance of the terrible Justice of Almighty God, will draw down heavier Judgments upon us than we have yet felt. For the Justice of God will not always be out-dar'd by the Wickedness of Men. But if they are incorrigible in sinning, he will be inexorable in Punishing. For (to apply to our selves the remarkable Words of that pious Reformer, *Ezra ix. 13, 14.*) *If after all that is come upon us for our evil Deeds, and our great Trespas (wherein God has yet punish'd us far less than our Iniquities deserv'd)*

and after so glorious a Deliverance as this, we should again break his Commands, what could we look for but that a righteous God would be angry with us, till he have consum'd us, so that there should be no Remnant nor Escaping. For in this Case our publick Sins would be attended with two of the highest Aggravations we can well conceive, an insolent Contempt of God's terrible Judgments, and the vilest Ingratitude for as remarkable Favours as were ever bestow'd by Heaven upon an unworthy People.

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and after the manner of Providence as the
breath of his Spirit, what could be less for the
righteous God would be angry with us, all the more
as it is his will that we should be no less than
in this case our quickenings would be attended with
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worse as we are better by His Spirit upon an un-
worthy People

TO THE
CONGREGATION

UNDER THE

Author's Personal Care



DISCOURSES

ON THE

Four last Things, *viz.*

I. DEATH, III. HEAVEN,
II. JUDGMENT, AND
 IV. HELL.

And on some other

SUBJECTS relating thereunto.

TO THE
CONGREGATION
UNDER THE
AUTHOR'S Pastoral Care.



Having now been employ'd above Forty Years in my Ministerial Labours among you, and having had such a seasonable Warning of my own Mortality, as my dangerous Sickness, the last Year gave me; I resolv'd to publish the following plain and practical Discourses; and to leave them with you as a Testimony of the grateful Sense I have of the cordial Affection and Respect you have shewn to me. The Subjects which they chiefly treat on (*viz.* Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell,) are not among those abstruse Controversial Points, about which truly good Men may entertain different Sentiments; but the great and uncontested Truths of Christianity, which are of the highest Importance in themselves, and are like to have the most powerful Influence on your Practice of that holy Religion of our blessed Saviour, which you profess to believe and embrace.

The most moving Persuasives to a truly religious and holy Life, must be drawn from the Certainty of Death, the Solemnity of the final Judgment, and the infinitely momentous Issues thereof in an Happy or Miserable Eternity. If such Arguments as these Invisible Realities of the World to come suggest to us, will not prevail to deter us from the pernicious Paths of Sin, and to engage us to enter in at that strait Gate, and to walk in that narrow Way that leads to Eternal Life, there is little reason to expect that any other will.

I commend them therefore to your frequent and most serious Consideration. These Unseen Objects of a future State, will never make that deep Impression on our Hearts that must give them a governing Influence upon our Lives, if we do not suffer our Minds to dwell much on the attentive Contemplation of them.

And that these Discourses may be useful to You and Yours, and to Others, into whose Hands they may fall, to assist them in their effectual Preparation for those awful Events that are so great, so certain, and so near, shall be the earnest Prayer of him, that desires to live no longer than he may be serviceable to promote the great Work of your Salvation, and his own.

Nov. 4. 1724.



J. BOYSE.

THE
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SERMON



S E R M O N I.

On D E A T H.

Ecclef. vii. 2.

It is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting, for that is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to his Heart.



SINCE I design in the following Discourses, to treat of the Certainty and Solemnity of the final Judgment, and of those vastly different States we shall then enter upon, either of Everlasting Punishment, or blissful Eternal Life, I shall, to prepare the Way for them, premise some Meditations concerning Natural Death, which puts an End to our State of Trial here, and is our Entrance on a State of final Retribution.

I know indeed, That Death is a Subject that has exercis'd the Thoughts and Pens of so many Writers, Sacred and Profane, that 'tis not to be expected that any Thing new can be offer'd upon it. And this awful Event is so known and certain, that one wou'd at first think, that no Man needed to be reminded of it. None are so ignorant and vain as to promise themselves an Immortality here on Earth. None pretend to expect an Exemption from the common and unavoidable Lot of Mankind; and how different soever their Way may be, all look to be lodg'd at last in the House of Mourning, in the solitary Grave, for that they know is the End of all Men.

But how obvious and universally acknowledg'd soever this Truth may be; 'tis apparent, that the generality of Mankind seldom think of it; and much seldomer make those instructive Reflexions upon it, and draw those practical Inferences from it, which so important a Subject, would suggest to all that attentively ponder it. All of us need a Monitor, that should daily proclaim it in our Ears, and that, with the loudest and most awakening Voice, *Remember Man that thou must die.* And the most of us need to be taught and directed, to what excellent Purposes our Meditations, upon this solemn and awful Theme, should be improv'd.

And to assist you herein, I have chosen to insist on these Words of the inspir'd Preacher.

In the foregoing Part of the Verse, he determines, That *'tis better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting.* And that not only because in general, *Sorrow is better than Laughter,* v. 3. (as more disposing us to those wise and serious

Thoughts, which the other rather tends to banish and stifle) but particularly, because in the House of Mourning we have one of the most affecting and instructive Objects imaginable set before our Eyes. For it may be truly said of every Instance of Mortality we behold there, That *though dead he yet speaks,* and reads to all the Spectators a convincing Lecture concerning the common End of all Men, telling us what we our selves must e'er long expect to be. So that if we be not strangely stupid and unthinking Creatures, the Preacher might well add, *The Living will lay it to his Heart.* He will be mov'd at so awful a Sight; he will deeply consider what it suggests to his Thoughts; he will contemplate the case as his own; he will entertain such Resolutions and Purposes, in reference to his future Life, as the Prospect of this solemn Conclusion and End of it should inspire him with. He will do thus, if he make but due Improvement of what is now before his Eyes; and 'tis his own inexcusable Fault, if this affecting Object make not such suitable Impressions on his Mind.

The Subject then which the Words present to our Thoughts is this,

The frequent View and serious Contemplation of Death, the common End of all Men, should be very affecting and instructive to the Living. Or,

Death, the common End of all Men, should be often and deeply considered by the Living, and the Contemplation thereof should be very affecting and instructive to them.

In prosecution of this Subject I shall,

First, Take notice, what there is in Death, the common End of all Men, that requires so frequent and deep consideration of it.

Secondly, I shall, as I go along, suggest to you some of those useful practical Instructions and Inferences which we should draw from thence.

First, I shall take notice, what there is in Death, the common End of all Men, that deserves and requires our frequent and deep Consideration.

And here it becomes us to turn our Eyes every way upon this affecting Subject, and to observe,

I. What Death is in it self, abstractedly consider'd.

II. Whence it comes to be the End of all Men.

III. Its

III. Its reference to our *past Life*, as the *End* and *Conclusion* thereof.

IV. Its reference to the *future Life*, as the *Passage* and *Entrance* into it.

V. The *Certainty* of it, as the *unavoidable End* of all Men.

VI. The *Time* of its coming. 'Tis in general fix'd and determin'd. It will come soon when longest deferr'd. It may come upon us much sooner.

Of these in their order. And,

I. 'Tis fit we should contemplate Death in it self more abstractedly consider'd.

And so we know that in general, 'tis the *Dissolution* of that *Union* between our Souls and Bodies, on which our present *Animal Life* depends. And tho' we have no reason to think that the *Essential Life* of our nobler Part, is hereby extinguish'd, but the clearest ground to conclude on the contrary, That that diviner *Breath of Life* does not expire when the *Breath of our Nostrils* goes forth; yet if we consider human Nature as 'tis now compounded and made up of *Soul* and *Body*, Death may in some sense be accounted the visible *destruction* of it. It does actually reduce all of Man that's visible to our Senses to deplorable Ruins. It tears down this curious *Tabernacle* and *Mansion* of our outward Man, which the Divine Wisdom had so exquisitely form'd, so that the *indwelling Spirit* can animate and act in it no more. Of that active and sprightly Creature that we beheld a while before, (so full of busy Thoughts, so big with great Projects and Designs, so industrious and laborious in the prosecution of them) Death leaves nothing in our view but a *lifeless* and *breathless Lump*, devoid of all *Sense* and *Motion*, a *bideous* and *ghastly*, and very soon a *noisome*, and *offensive Spectacle*, that we are oblig'd to hide from the Eyes of the Living, and commit to a dark and silent Grave, where it becomes the *Spoil* and *Prey* of *Worms*. Such visible Contempt does Death pour on human Nature; such a *dark* and *black Cloud* does it draw over all the visible *Beauty* and *Glory* of it. It reduces us to our despicable Original, it turns *Dust* to *Dust*, and *Asbes* to *Asbes*, defacing that noble Stamp that our Clay had received from the Hand of the Divine Potter, when he *curiously formed us in the lower Parts of the Earth*, Psal. cxxxix. 15.

'Tis true indeed, how this vital Union is dissolved, how this *Knot* and *Band* that ties our Souls and Bodies is loos'd, we can no more tell, then how so different Things come to be so closely and intimately conjoin'd at first. How an *immortal Mind* should be so nearly ally'd and link'd to an *organiz'd Clod of Earth*, in order to its present *Sensations* and *Motions*, we cannot conceive; and we know as little how the unwelcome Separation is made. None of those numberless *Spirits* that have been dislodged from the Body, ever came from that unknown State, to acquaint us, what it is to Die?

Only this we know, That Death does usually in its near Approaches offer some considerable *Violence* to our Nature; and the *Separation* of Soul and Body is not commonly made without a sharp *Opposition* and *Conflict*. And hence we so often read and hear, nay, often behold the *Pangs of Death*. 'Tis true indeed, in some few the spark of Life does almost *insensibly expire*, like a *Taper*, whose Light goes gently and gradually out for want of more Fuel to supply it. But in most, Nature does not yield to this last Enemy, without some force and struggle, that manifests its deep Reluctancy and Aversion. Death may in most be fitly called the *Shipwreck of Nature*. Our vital Parts being as it were rent and torn with the Violence of painful *Diseases*, as the *Vessel* is by the Rage of the *Winds* and *Waves*, before we sink into the *Abyss* of the Grave. Death usually brings along with it, (as one well speaks) a *sad Retinue*, *Sickness* and *Pain* before, and *Darkness* all behind. And indeed 'tis these unwelcome *Harbingers* that chiefly

give Death so grim an *Aspect* in the Eye of good Men themselves, and represent it as the *King of Terrors*. As we may see in pious *Hezekiah's* mournful Complaint, *He will cut me off with pining Sickness. From day even to night, then wilt thou make an end of me, I reckon'd that till morning, as a Lion, so will he break all my Bones*, Isa. xxxviii. 12, 13. And how often do the deep *Groans* of our dying Friends give us a sensible Conviction what *Agonies* they feel, when these intimate Associates of Soul and Body suffer a forcible *Divorce*, and are, as it were, torn from one another. So that, doubtless, Death consider'd in it self, is a formidable Evil. There is generally a *Bitterness* in it to dying Persons themselves, as well as *Terror* and *Affright* to those that survive.

And sure such a visible *Ruin* brought on human Nature must needs be a *penal Evil* too, a Mark of the Divine Displeasure, which leads me therefore,

II. To consider, *Whence it is, that Death comes to be the End of all Men?*

Must we resolve it into the *meer Sovereign pleasure* of God, who without any regard to our Demerit, has subjected our Nature to such *Mortality* and *Corruption*; or must we resolve it into his *Justice*, as the deserved *Fruit* and *Punishment of Sin*?

Ans. If indeed we had no other notices of Things then what the light of Nature affords, we might be prone to conclude, as the generality of the Heathens did, that *Mortality* does necessarily and unavoidably result from our *natural Constitution*. For what can be more *natural* than for what is form'd out of the *Dust* to be resolv'd into *Dust* again, or for *Flesh* and *Blood* to be liable to *Corruption*? No wonder then that the Heathens went no farther in their Enquiry about the Cause of our Mortality, than the *Principles* of which our Bodies are compounded, which are so apparently *obnoxious to Dissolution*.

But 'tis evident on the other hand, That the Scriptures on the contrary assert Death to be a *penal Evil*, and ascribe our Subjection to it, to the *Justice*, and not to the *meer Sovereignty* of God.

For they do not suppose this to have been the Case of Man in his *State of Innocence*. For though *Immortality* was not due to Man antecedently to the Promise of God, and was no Privilege that an earthly Creature could claim as an *original Right* of its Nature; yet it was promised to Man as the *Reward of his Obedience*. His Body indeed, which was first framed out of the *Dust* of the Earth, is not so suited for a perpetual Life as his Soul, and therefore could only have enjoyed it as a particular Favour, through the special care of Divine Providence for its Preservation. And this probably is the *Apostle's* Meaning, when he saith, *The first Adam is from the Earth, earthly*, [ἐκ γῆς χαϊνός] 1 Cor. 15. 47. His Body was taken from the Earth, and therefore in its own Nature easily capable of returning to it. But yet God was pleased to encourage Man to his Duty, by the Prospect of this *supernatural Privilege* and *Benefit*. For God's *threatning Death* as the *Punishment of Sin*, plainly implies, it should not have been Man's Lot if he had persevered in his Duty. He that would not have exposed him to this Misery without his having deserved it by Sin, would have exempted him from it, if he had not offended. Nor is it improbable, that Adam had an express Promise of it, though there was no need for the inspired Historian to mention it, since he so soon forfeited the promised Blessing; and since that Promise is so evidently imply'd in the contrary Threatning.

For we may well suppose it agreeable to the goodness of God, to assure his innocent Creature of the perpetuity of that Life, which during his state of Trial, he entirely employed to glorify the Giver of it. He would not take it away from his obedient Subject, when no way forfeited by any undutiful Carriage. So that Man, while he continued

Sinless

Sinless, was by the Divine Promise and Favour entitled to Immortality. Whether indeed the Fruit of the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, was appointed by God as the natural Means for perpetuating this Animal Life of our first Parents? Nay, whether that Life it self was to have been perpetuated on Earth, or after some time of Trial exchanged (though without dying) for a higher Life in the heavenly Regions? Are Questions too difficult for us with any clearness and certainty to resolve, though the latter seems more probable.

That Man therefore is now become mortal, i. e. that he must die, is the penal Fruit of Sin. 'Tis the Justice of God that, in the Execution of his own Threatning, has subjected him to this unavoidable Necessity. *Death is the Wages of Sin*, Rom. vi. ult.

And this is the plain Account the Scriptures give of it, By one Man (saith the Apostle Paul, Rom. v. 12.) Sin enter'd into the World, and Death by Sin, and so Death pass'd on all Men, for that all have sinned. It was at this Door, that Death, with all the preceding Train of Diseases and Pains, Calamities and Miseries of every Kind, broke in upon this lower World, and rendred it such a Vale of Tears and Scene of Woe. No sooner had Adam sinn'd, but all his Title to this supernatural Privilege was forfeited; and the contrary Sentence took hold on him, *In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt die*. And he could not transmit to his Posterity that title to Immortality he had lost himself. And without such a Title our Earthly Nature and Animal Life, must needs be liable to Dissolution. He that through Sin became mortal himself, could propagate no other than a mortal Nature to his Offspring. Nor is this any Impeachment of the Justice of God, that Adam's Posterity should be subjected to the natural Consequences of his Sin; and especially that they should not derive from him a supernatural Privilege which he forfeited. It had been no Injustice if God had made innocent Man and all his Posterity mortal, and 'tis much less unjust to do so, when by Sin he had provok'd him to withhold such an undeserv'd Favour, both from himself and from them too. And that his Sin is sufficient to involve all his Offspring in this Punishment, is evident from the case of many Infants; who, though they never actually sinned, yet are by virtue of the Divine Threatning under the common necessity of Dying. And the Justice of God is the more unexceptionable if we consider, that all the Offspring of Adam derive from him such a sinful deprav'd Nature, as according to his righteous Threatning renders them obnoxious to Death. 'Tis but congruous to the Divine Justice, that the Empire of Death should be as universal as the Dominion of Sin; that wherever the defilement of Sin spreads, Death should invade and reign. 'Tis therefore the righteous Sentence of God on fallen Man; and expressive of his just Abhorrence of our defiled Nature, *Dust thou art and to Dust thou shalt return*, Gen. iii. 19. And 'tis in reference to this penal Doom that the Author to the Hebrews tells us, 'Tis appointed unto all Men once to die, Heb. ix. 27. Appointed by the irreversible Arrest and Decree of Divine Justice, which none must expect Exemption from.

And how reasonable is it, that this should be laid to Heart; that this account of Death's Entrance into the World should be deeply consider'd by us?

And therefore, instead of proceeding now to the remaining Heads I propos'd, I shall choose rather to close what I wou'd say in reference to these already insisted on.

Secondly, By suggesting to you some practical Instructions and Inferences, from what has been already discours'd concerning Death.

Does Death bring with it such visible Ruin upon our Nature? And is it the penal Effect and Fruit of Sin? Then,

I. How effectually shou'd the consideration hereof bid Pride from our Eyes, and teach us abasing Thoughts of our selves!

Alas! What is Man, that he should be Proud, who carries about with him such Arguments and Motives to Humility in the frailty of his Constitution, and mortality of his State! Shou'd he boast of his Extraction and Descent, of his Kindred and Family, who may with Job, say to Corruption thou art my Father, and to the Worm thou art my Mother and my Sister? Job xvii. 14. Shall we glory in the Beauty or Strength of those Bodies whose comely Features the rude hand of Death will so soon deface; and whose Strength will not e'er long defend 'em from becoming the Prey of contemptible Worms? Shall we make that our Pride now, which will so soon put on a ghastly Aspect, and be turn'd into loathsome Putrefaction? Shall we be puffed up with our Wealth and Honour, who must so soon exchange all our other Possessions for that of a Burying-place; and who must descend into the silence and obscurity of the Grave, where those that have soar'd the highest here, must lie level with their Fellow-Dust; and where there's no mark of Distinction between the Skull of a Prince and a Peasant? Shall we be proud of our Habitation here, who our selves dwell in Houses of Clay whose foundation is in the Dust, and must e'er long take up the Grave for our House, and make our Bed in darkness? Job xvii. 13. Shall those be proud of their Conquests and their formidable Power, over whom Death will so soon irresistibly Triumph, and whom their very conquer'd Captives shall so soon have occasion to upbraid and say, *Art thou also become weak as we? Art thou become like to us? Thy Pomp is brought down to the Grave, the Worm is spread under thee; is this the Man that made the Earth to tremble, that did shake Kingdoms? That made the World as a Wilderness, and destroyed the Cities thereof, that opened not the House of his Prisoners?* See Isa. xiv. 10, 11, -- 16, 17. v. What is such a despicable Worm as Man, that's even crush'd before the Moth, that he should entertain swelling Conceits of himself! Shall he lift up that Head with scornful and aspiring Thoughts that Death will lay so low? The Grave is the truest Mirrour to look our selves in, in order to the curing our vain and self-admiring Thoughts. It will shew us what all our Grandeur and Prosperity will come to; and tell us, That how glittering a Figure soever we make here, we are but more splendid Dust, and none of our Glory will descend with us to the Grave.

We may, as Herod, affect to be applauded as Gods, but the Worms will soon convince us, we are but Men.

II. The Consideration hereof should prevent our being so over solicitous about these Earthly Bodies.

For if these Earthly Tabernacles shall be dissolved, if Death will tear down these Structures of Clay, they deserve no more of our Care than what is needful to fit them for their present Use and Service. How incongruous is it then to be so anxiously concern'd about feeding and cloathing; nay, about adorning and pampering this corruptible Flesh, that will so soon be turn'd into Rottenness and Putrefaction! Does it deserve so much of our Time and Thoughts to garnish a tottering House that's ready every Day to moulder into Dust? Shou'd those Bodies be treated with so much needless Curiosity and Cost, which we must so soon put off, and leave in the Darkness of the noisome Grave? Nay, should we not, as much as possible, wean our Souls from that inordinate Love to them that would render the Separation more violent and grievous? Shou'd we not accustom our Souls to live in a great measure above the Body, to prepare them the better to live without it! The less commerce and sympathy we maintain with them here, the less terrible will the Thoughts of our dislodging be!

III. We may hence see, how little Man is to be either *trusted* or *feared*, when consider'd as a *Mortal Creature*.

How little is Man to be *trusted*! How little is their Favour and Interest to be depended on! Men of low Degree are but *Vanity*, and cannot help us. Men of high Degree are a *Lie*, and may by the Inconstancy of their Resolutions, disappoint our Expectations from them, *Psal. lxii. 9.* If any deserv'd our Confidence, it would be such as are *great and powerful*. But even these we are caution'd against placing our Reliance on, from the consideration of their Mortality. Put not your Trust in Princes, nor in the Son of Man in whom there is no Help. His Breath goes forth, he returneth to his Earth, in that very day his Thoughts perish, *Psal. cxlvi. 3, 4.*

And Man is as little to be *feared* as he is to be *trusted*.

Whose Power we are more apt to dread and tremble at than that of cruel Tyrants, and bloody Persecutors? And yet the great GOD justly upbraids his People with their distrustful Dread of their Power, from this very Argument, *Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a Man that shall die? And of the Son of Man that shall be as Grass? And forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the Heavens, and laid the Foundations of the Earth, and hast feared continually every Day because of the Fury of the Oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? And where is the Fury of the Oppressor? Isaiah ii. 11, 12.*

IV. Hence we may see the grounds of that justifiable Aversion that our Nature has to the Stroke of Death.

For it is (as you have heard) in it self a formidable Evil, as it is the Violation of our Nature, one part whereof it destroys; and 'tis the more formidable, as it is the just demerit of Sin, and the standing Mark of God's righteous Displeasure against it. And no doubt, 'tis under this Notion good Men have consider'd it, when they so earnestly deprecate it. Thus David, *Psal. xxxix. 13.* Hear my Prayer, O Lord, and give Ear unto my Cry, hold not thy peace at my Tears, &c. O spare me that I may recover strength before I go hence and be seen no more. See also the like Temper and Language in good Hezekiah, *Isa. xxxviii. 10, &c.* And therefore he accounts it as an Instance of God's Love to his Soul, That he had delivered it from the Pit of Corruption, *v. 17.* And indeed the great God has wisely planted in our Nature such an Aversion to Death; because this obliges us to a due care of the Preservation of our Life, while God has any service for us to do here; and even our natural Fear of Death, is a Preservative against many destructive Vices, and renders even the worst of Men more capable of being aw'd by human Laws. So that some Reluctancy against dying is to be found in all, even the best of Men. For even they, when, with the Apostle Paul, they most earnestly longed after a blessed Immortality, yet they are not so desirous of being uncloth'd, *2 Cor. v. 4.* But tho' this natural Aversion be justifiable when kept within its due Bounds; yet on the other hand we must beware of its becoming so inordinate and violent, as to damp our heavenly Desires. It must be so far conquered, that we must be prevalently willing and confident to be absent from the Body, that we may be present with the Lord, *2 Cor. v. 8.* The prospect of what we expect beyond the Grave, must enable us with a steady Trust, to follow the Divine Conduct through that shady Valley, though Nature cannot but tremble at the Darkeness of that gloomy Passage. We must, with a resolute Faith encounter this our last Enemy, though our weak Flesh may shrink a little at the Prospect of so sharp a Conflict.

V. Hence we may infer the poisonous Malignity of Sin, through which Death is now entered into the World.

'Tis Sin that has entail'd this righteous Curse of Mortality upon our fallen Nature, and exposed it

to the ruining Stroke of Death. 'Tis this that gives that King of Terrors so unlimited a Dominion in this lower World; and through the righteous Sentence of God, exposes our natural Life to unavoidable Destruction. 'Tis this that turns those Bodies, which were the beautiful Workmanship of God, into a vile and loathsome Carcass, which we cannot behold without Horror, and are glad to cast out of our sight. 'Tis this that throws such Contempt upon our Nature, and covers it with Deformity and Darkeness. Sure then there must be a strange Malignity in Sin, when the penal Fruits of it are so terrible, when, by the just Constitution of God, 'tis inevitably attended with natural Death. What reason have we then to reverence the awful Justice of God in this terrible Stroke! For nothing but Sin could provoke him to inflict it. Nothing but the defacing his mortal Image in us, could so incense him, as to make him thus destroy the Work of his own Hands, and to dissolve that curious Earthly Tabernacle that his own Power and Skill had erected and framed. Natural Death then is a standing Declaration of God's Abhorrence of our defiled Nature. He has peremptorily determined, that as 'tis stained by Sin, 'it shall be defaced by Death. As this House of Clay is infected with that odious Leprosy, so the Walls of it shall be pulled down. Even Infants must be subject to Death, because they derive this Contagion from their natural Birth; they have the Seeds of Mortality, because they have the Seeds of Sin in them. O let us not then entertain any slight Thoughts of the Evil of Sin, since this is the fruitful Womb of all the Miseries that lead unto and issue in natural Death. Let us not despise that Justice and Severity of God against it, of which we behold so sensible and convincing Instances, as often as any Spectacles of Mortality are set before our Eyes.

VI. Hence we may infer, How deeply we are all of us concerned to be fenced against the Terrors of Natural Death.

If we only regard the violent Agonies of Pain, that are the usual Attendants on Natural Death, it is highly requisite we should be furnished with our richest Cordials against that Time, when Flesh and Heart are ready to fail. When Nature is sinking under a heavy Load of Infirmities, when our Senses are declining, when the Pangs of Death encompass us about, what need had we then of securing some solid Relief and Support under such a Conflict as this? And what can then support us but the thoughts of our Interest in that glorious God, who can be the strength of our Hearts and our Portion for ever, *Psal. lxxiii. 20.* What can be a sufficient Cordial, but the peaceful Reflexions of a good Conscience upon our past Integrity, and its comfortable prospect of a blessed Eternity? We are then alone prepared to die, when we have nothing else to do but to die, and resign up a sanctified Soul into the hands of God.

But if we farther regard Death as the Fruit of Sin, and standing Mark of God's Displeasure against it, we have the more need to be fortified against the Fears of it. It must be therefore our great care to get the Sting of Death taken away, and the Terror of it removed. Now, though the manner and circumstances of dying are formidable, yet doubtless, the chief Terror of Death arises from the guilt of Sin that binds us over to everlasting Death.

'Tis that chiefly gives natural Death so mortal a Sting, and enables it to pierce the Conscience of a guilty Sinner with so inexpressible Agonies of Fear. O what terrible Convulsions and Anguish seize his appalled Heart, when he cannot live, and yet dare not die! When he sees the Sentence of Dissolution written on the Walls of this House of Clay, and that by the invisible but avenging Hand of Heaven! When he not only sees Death riding on his pale Horse, but Hell following as the black Attendant! (To allude to Rev. vi. 8.) When Conscience sees nothing behind but a

vast

st Load of unpardoned Guilt, and nothing before but
aped Treasures of unappeased Wrath. When the
oughts of that God, who alone can relieve his
ing Soul, rather administer Matter of Terror and
espair to him! When he looks on Death as the
m Pursuant of his awful Judge, sent to summon
m to that dreadful Bar, where he easily foresees
his own Doom in the direful Presages of an accused
Conscience.

Since then we must die, and that by vertue of
the righteous Sentence of God, O let us endea-
mour to be duly prepared for that solemn Event.
Let us endeavour to get that removed, which a-
bove all things would render Death frightful to
us. Let us by serious Repentance and believing Ap-
plication to the forgiving Mercy of God, through
Christ, lay hold on that Act of Pardon and Indem-
nity that he has publish'd, that so our Sentence of
Eternal Death may be reversed, and our Title to a
Blessed Immortality restored. Let us enter upon and
persevere in those ways of Holiness, the blessed End
whereof will be Everlasting Life. And then indeed
we are safeguarded from what is most terrible in
natural Death. To such prepared Souls, Death has
lost its deadly Poison and tormenting Sting. Death may
indeed dissolve the House of this Earthly Tabernacle;
but then we have a House not made with hands Eter-
nal in the Heavens, 2 Cor. v. 1. It may turn these

Bodies into the Dust from whence they were taken,
but how inconsiderable an Evil is that to those that
foresee, that the Grave itself is a safe Repository to
the Dust that's lodged there; and that what is there
sown in weakness and dishonour, and corruption, shall be
raised in power and glory, and incorruption.

Such prepared Souls may behold Death, not in
its terrifying, but its amiable friendly Aspect, as now
made to them great Advantage and Gain, Phil. i. 21.
Their confidence in the Divine Presence and Fa-
vour, may enable them to walk through that shady
Valley without (distracting) Fear. That Death, that
divorces their Souls from their Bodies, will but bring
them sooner into the Presence of Christ, the blessed
Object of their Faith and Love, and Joy. Their
Death, that excludes them from the Society of the
Living, so that they must behold Man no more with
the Inhabitants of this World, will but translate them
to better Society, even the innumerable Company of
Angels, and the perfected Spirits of the Just. (But of
this more may occur hereafter.) O let us then get
our Guilt pardoned, and the Favour of a reconciled
God secured, and then the Bitterness and Curse of
Death is taken away. We shall then encounter it as
a disarmed and enfeebled Enemy, and by the Exercise
of Divine Faith and Hope, obtain an easy Victory
over it.

S E R M O N II.

On D E A T H.

Eccles. vii. 2.

*It is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting, for that is
the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to his Heart.*



Have already entred on the Subject
which these Words present to our Me-
ditation, viz.

That Death, the common End of
all Men, should be often and deeply
considered by the Living, and the Con-
templation thereof should be very affecting and in-
structive to us.

I have in the Prosecution of this Subject, led you
to contemplate,

I. What there is in Death more abstractedly con-
sidered.

II. How it comes to be the common End of all
Men.

And made several Practical Reflections thereon.

I now proceed,

III. To consider, The Reference that Death has to
his present Life, as the End and Conclusion thereof.

And so 'tis called in the Text, The End of all Men.

'Tis the Epilogue that concludes the Play of human
Life, upon which the transitory Scenes thereof are

shut up, and the Actors hurried from off the Stage.

As in the dead of the Night, there is an entire stop

put to all the Business and Affairs of the Day, so

that Palaces and Temples, Schools and Theatres, Courts

of Justice, and Places of publick Resort and Conversa-

tion are shut up, and all Things seem to be wrap'd

up in universal Silence and Obscurity; so when the

Night of Death hath overtaken us, all the Actions and
Enjoyments of this Life entirely cease, all the momen-
tary Affairs and Pleasures of it are gone and past for
ever.

But here we may distinctly consider this Life in re-
ference both to the Affairs and Business of it, and as
to our Condition and Lot in it. And we may distinct-
ly consider both our secular and our spiritual Affairs,
and the different Seasons we enjoy for both. And
so,

I. Death puts an End to all our worldly Projects and
Affairs.

II. It puts an End to our present worldly Condition,
whether it be prosperous or afflicted.

III. It puts an End to all the Seasons and Advantages
of Divine Grace we enjoy.

IV. And it puts an End to all our present Opportuni-
ties of Work and Service to the Interest of God, in order to
our comfortable Account.

1. Death puts an End to all our worldly Projects and
Affairs.

What is said of great Princes themselves, when
they die, is as applicable to all others, Their Breath
goes out, they return to the Earth; and that very day all
their Thoughts perish, Psal. cxlvi. 4.

'Tis an observable Remark that the Roman Histo-
rian, Suetonius, makes on Julius Cæsar, That after
he assumed the Imperial Power, he had great Designs
in

in his Head about adorning *Rome*, the Seat of the Empire, about reducing their numerous Laws into a less Compass, and about making an Abstract of the Works of the most learned Romans and Greeks; but (saith he) *Talia Agentem atque meditantem mors prævenit*. While he was busy managing these vast Undertakings, Death, by its surprizing Stroke, prevented the Execution of them. While the plodding Statesman is erecting various Schemes, and forming huge Designs for his Prince's Grandeur, or for his own Preferment, and has concerted all Methods for effecting them, and, as he thinks, removed all Obstacles out of the way, Death quickly breaks all his Measures, and blasts all the Success which his Thoughts were swelled with the Prospect of; so that while, with the Philosopher, he was gazing at the Stars, in his towering Hopes, with him he falls into the Dutch of the Grave, which he had no present fore-thought of, and against which indeed he could use no effectual Precaution. While the laborious Worldling is restlessly employed in adding House to House, and Field to Field, and enlarging his Treasures, Death in a Moment puts an End to his busy Cares and Toils, and he that a while ago was grasping at vast Possessions, must be now content with the Possession of a Burying-place; a little measure of Earth will now serve him that before was contriving how he might be placed alone in it, *Isa. v. 8. Mors sola fatetur, Quantula sunt hominum Corpuscula*. Nay the poorest are usually full of anxious Cares and Contrivances for securing the necessary Supports of Life, which Death will quickly ease them of. It puts an End to the Ploughing and Sowing of Husbandmen, and gives the wearied Hireling rest from all his painful Labours. It carries all off from the Theatre of publick Action and Business, and confines them to the dark Prison of the Grave, where those that a while ago made so great a Noise and Bustle in the World, are now lock'd up in a profound Sleep, out of which nothing but the sound of the last Trumpet can awaken them.

2. Death puts an End to our present worldly Condition, whether it be prosperous or afflicted, to all the Enjoyments or Miseries of Life.

It puts an End to all the Enjoyments of the most prosperous and flourishing Condition, by destroying Life it self the Foundation of them. Death irresistibly tames and triumphs over the proudest Conquerors of the Earth, and quickly disarms them of that formidable Power that made them the common Plague and Terror of all the Nations round about them. It hurries the greatest Princes from the Glories of the Throne to the Obscurity of the Grave. It fetches the aspiring Grandees of the Earth from that high and slippery Pinnacle of secular Honour, from which they now look down with so much Contempt upon their Inferiors, and lays them level with their Fellow-Dust. And none of that glittering Pomp and Splendor, for which they now are so envy'd and admir'd, shall descend with them to the Grave. Death strips them naked of all these gaudy Trappings, and leaves no visible distinction between noble and ignoble Dust. No Marks of their former Power or Greatest, their Dignity and Pre-eminence appear in their ghastly Remains of Mortality; so that what is particularly said of proud Jezebel, may be applied to them, they shall not say, *This is Jezebel*, i. e. not be able to discern, that this was the Daughter and Wife of a King, 2 Kings ix. 37. Death will violently dispossess the rich Worldling of all his beloved Treasures. He can carry none of these away with him, he may now build stately Houses, and furnish them with costly Moveables; he may purchase a large Estate of Lands, but Death will soon bring a Writ of Ejectment, and force him to quit all, and take up for his Mansion a solitary Cave in the Dust of the Earth. And the Places that now know him on Earth, shall then know him no more. He may, having enlarged his Barns, and increased his Stores, now propose to himself the Satisfaction of enjoying the Goods he has

laid up for many Years, when, perhaps, Death brings him the unwelcome Message, *Thou Fool, this very Night shall thy Soul be taken from thee, and thou whose shall these things be that thou hast laid up? Whose shall they be?* For thine they must be no longer, Luke xii. 18, 19, 20. The voluptuous Sensualist may now swim in carnal Pleasures, and pass a few Days or Years in Jollity and Mirth. He may now busily contrive for the gratification of his Senses and Appetites by a variety of agreeable Objects to entertain them. He may, with Solomon eagerly pursue all the Delights of the Sons of Men, and not abstain from any thing his Eyes desires, or withhold his Heart from any Joy, Eccles. ii. 8, 10. But, alas! Death will soon marr all his Sport, and close his Eyes upon all the charming Objects he is surrounded with. There's no Entertainments of Musick and Dancing, no Feasting and Revelling in the silent Grave. Those that are now spiritually dead while they live in these sensual Pleasures, must e're long literally die to them. They may for a while rant and sing, but Death will soon change their Tune, and turn their pleasant Notes into doleful Groans. They may for a while give the Reins to their unbridled Lusts, and run into all Excesses of sinful Riot, but Death will soon shut them up as melancholly Recluses in the solitary Cloister and Cell of the Grave. We may now please our selves in numerous Relations and Friends that we are encompassed with; but Death will soon violently snatch and tear us out of their tenderest Embraces, and send us to that Place of Solitude and Darkness, where (as Hezekiah speaks, *Is. xxxviii. 11.*) we must behold Man no more with all the Inhabitants of the World. So that Death, by bereaving us of Life, will also dispossess us of all the desirable Advantages of it.

Nay, on the other hand, Death puts an End to all the Evils of an afflicted Condition, to all the Miseries, as well as Pleasures of Life. Death gives a persecuted Saint a happy Discharge from all the Hardships of his Christian Warfare. It puts an End to all the Cruelties of bloody Persecutors, and to his own Sufferings from them. Their Rage can pursue him no farther than the Grave; and there the Wicked cease from troubling, and the Weary are at rest, Job iii. 17. See 18, 19. There the Prisoners rest together, they hear not the Voice of the Oppressor; the small and great are there, and the Servant is free from his Master. Death is a safe Harbour and sure Retreat to a good Man, from all the Storms and Troubles of a calamitous Life. 'Tis the sovereign Opium that gives effectual Release and Ease from all the dolorous Pains of a distemper'd Body. The Clods of the Valley afford a sweet Retirement and Rest to him, whose Life has been a continued Scene of Labours and Sorrows. Death puts an End to our present Grievs, by closing our Eyes on the sad Objects and Occasions of them. And 'tis on that account often as welcome to those that groan under the Pressure of present Afflictions, as the Shadow and Darkness of the Night is to the wearied Hireling. (As Job intimates, Job vii. 2.) But farther,

3. Death puts an End to all the Seasons and Advantages of the Divine Grace which we now enjoy.

We are now placed in a state of Trial, as Probationers for the endless Happiness or Misery of a future Life. And accordingly by the singular Favour of God we enjoy here many Helps, for attaining those measures of Knowledge and Grace, that should prepare us for the Perfection and Blessedness of the Heavenly State. We have now many precious Opportunities put into our Hands, by our Lot being cast in a Land and Age of Light, by our being planted in the Courts of God, and under the Dew of Heaven; by our being trained up in the School of Grace, where we have Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept. But Death will soon put an End to all these preparatory Methods of Divine Grace. Our

Our Day of Grace cannot be protracted beyond that of our Life; Death will soon silence the most faithful Preachers, or will close your Eyes from seeing your Teachers, and stop your Ears from bearing the joyful Sound of the everlasting Gospel. Death will put an end to all the Treaties of Divine Grace; there are no Overtures of Mercy, no Tenders of Life and Salvation in the other World. You must then Hear and Read and Pray no more. Now only is the accepted Time and the accepted Day of Salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. The Time of Life is our Day of Trial, as distinguished from God's Day of Retribution, xix Luke 42.

4. Death puts an End to all our present Opportunities of Work and Service in order to our comfortable Account,

We have now manifold Talents committed to our Trust; we have various Occasions of doing as well as receiving Good. And we must be accountable for our Fidelity and Diligence in the Improvement of them. But Death will quickly conclude this our State of Trial and Probation. E're long our Seed-time will be over, and we must reap the Fruits of what we have sown to the Flesh, or to the Spirit. We have but a few Hours more to labour in the Vineyard of the Lord, and shall soon rest from our Labours and our Works follow us. We have but a few Days or Years wherein to work the Works of him that sent us; and the Night is approaching wherein we can Work no more. ix John 4. 'Tis now that we must do whatever our hands find us to do with all our might, since there is no Work, nor Device; no Knowledge or Wisdom in the Grave whither we are going, ix Eccles. 10. Our Time of Obedience and Service, of Combat and Warfare will soon be over. Death will give us our quietus est from all the Duties of the particular Station wherein we are placed. All Opportunities of promoting the Interest and Glory of God, and of furthering the present and eternal Good of others will then be gone for ever, past all Hope of being recalled. Death brings us that Message, Give an Account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayest be Steward no longer, xvi Luke 2.

Such an awful Reference has Death to our past Life, as the End and Conclusion of that. But,

IV. We may farther consider the Reference that Death has to our future Life, as the Passage and Entrance into it.

For though Death put an End to that low Animal Life which the Soul enjoyed while united to an earthly Body, yet we must by no means conceive it, as an extinction of its own essential Life. The Soul does not cease to live and act when it ceases to animate this organized Clod of Earth. As to our higher and immortal Part, Death only brings a remarkable Change of our Way and State of Life. And particularly in the following Respects.

1. By Death our dislodged Souls are brought to live in a State of Separation from these Earthly Bodies.

2. By Death they enter upon an unseen World, and change their Place of Living.

3. By Death they enter into a Life and State of final Retribution.

1. By Death our dislodged Souls are obliged to live in a State of Separation from these Earthly Bodies.

For though our Dust return unto the Earth as it was, yet our Spirits return unto God that gave them, xii Eccles. They become upon their quitting these earthly Mansions unembodied and separate Spirits. And they enter upon a new Scene of Life in which they have no use for the gross Organs of Sense and Motion that belong to these Animal Bodies. Death sets our Spirits free from the Confinement and Disturbance, from the Incumbrance and Clog of an earthly Tabernacle, and doubtless thereby awakens their spiritual Powers to greater Vigour and Activity. It

enfranchises our Souls from their present Dependence upon these mortal Bodies, and from all the Impressions made upon them by sensible Objects by virtue of their strict Union to, and Sympathy with them. So that those Pleasures or Pains which their near Alliance to this Body made them capable of, cease for ever. And they are now derived from Objects more suited to the immaterial Nature of the Soul it self. And this argues a vast and unconceivable Difference in their way of Living. What some tell us of dislodged Spirits assuming aerial or ethereal Vehicles, are meer Conjectures about things unrevealed and unknown.

2. By Death our Souls enter into an unseen World, and change their Place as well as Way of Living.

We pass by Death from this Earth into the vast Hades (or Invisible World) and into the upper or lower Regions thereof. Into those Regions which our Senses can give us no Notice of, and where the manner of our conversing with the Inhabitants thereof is wholly unknown to us. Death translates us to an undiscovered Country, and to new Society there, which we have now no particular Acquaintance with. It makes a surprizing Change as to the Place of our Residence and Converse. Our Souls thereby pass out of the narrow Current of Time and launch into the untry'd boundless Ocean of Eternity. They leave this poor Tenement of Clay, nay, this narrow spot of Earth, to take their Flight into those vastly extended Territories and Dominions over which he presides that has the Keys of Death and of Hades (or the unseen State) Prov. i. 18. And by him they have their different Lot assign'd in the Mansions of Light, or the Regions of Darkness.

3. By Death they enter upon a Life of final Retribution.

And indeed this Notion of Death does especially deserve and require our attentive Consideration of it; that 'tis the Passage of a dislodged Soul from its State of Trial to its State of Rewards or Punishments. For though 'tis true the General and solemn Judgment will be deferred till the Resurrection, yet our Souls do upon their Departure hence undergo a particular Judgment, or something analogous to it. Even those that suppose Holy Souls not to be admitted into the Highest Heavens, nor wicked ones to be confined to any local Hell, till the Day of Judgment; yet suppose the one to enter on a State of Felicity and Joy, and the other of Horror and Misery; the one in the joyful Hope, the other in the fearful Expectation of that great Day and the important Issues thereof. But I shall from another Subject suggest to you several Reasons, whence we may more probably conclude, that the dislodged Souls of the Righteous immediately enter into the heavenly Paradise, and are present with Christ there; and our Lord plainly represents the deceased rich Man's Soul as in the Place of Torment, even that Place of Torment, that is, by an unpassable Chasm or Gulph separated from the Mansion and Seat of the Blessed. So that by Death our Souls enter upon a happy or miserable Eternity; they become either the Associates of blessed Angels, or of accursed Fiends; they are received into the Mansions of Bliss or thrust down into the Infernal Prison and Abyss. They enter upon the Glories and Joys of Heaven, or upon the Torments and Despair of Hell.

So that upon the whole, Death is our Entrance and Passage into our future Life, even a Life unspeakably more Happy or more Miserable, as well as beyond Comparison more durable and permanent than this.

And now before I proceed to the two remaining Heads, concerning the Certainty of Death and the Time of it, I shall make some Reflections upon these two Heads I have now discours'd on, viz. the Reference that Death has to this Life as the End and Conclusion of it, and the reference it has to a

E c future

future Life as the Passage and Entrance into it. And every particular under those Heads will afford us Matter for instructive Reflections.

I. Does Death put an End to all our secular Affairs and Projects, then hence we may infer, *How inconsiderable they are in themselves, and how moderate we ought to be in the pursuit of them.*

We may hence infer, *How inconsiderable they are in themselves.*

This Earth is a busy Theatre and Scene, where every one is eagerly acting his Part, and where especially the Men of this World make a continual Bustle and Noise with their secular Projects and Designs. But how just is the Psalmist's Reflexion upon it, *Surely every Man walks in a vain shew, Surely they are disquieted in vain, He heaps up Riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them, Psa. xxxix. 40.* They seem serious and earnest indeed, but 'tis in pursuit of momentary Interests that are comparatively, but despicable Trifles. They are in chace of an empty Shadow rather than of any solid substantial Good. And they raise a great Tumult in the World to the disturbing themselves and others, and all to no valuable Purpose, to carry on some mighty Contrivance which Death will prevent their ever seeing the Accomplishment of. Or to treasure up what neither themselves, nor perhaps so much as any of theirs, shall ever possess and enjoy. Like *Ants on a Mole-hill* that are very busy in running to and fro, to gather and dispose their Store of Provision, when the spurn of a Foot quickly crushes them all. Of how mean and low Consideration then are those worldly Affairs, which can at the utmost only extend their beneficial Influence to this short and transitory Life, and which Death can so easily stop us in the Prosecution of! What a Scene of nauseous Vanity are the Affairs even of Kingdoms themselves, compared with the Affairs of the superior World, into which we are passing by Death!

Let this therefore teach us *Moderation in the pursuit of all our secular Concerns.*

We must indeed subserve the Providence of God by our moderate Labours in order to the Sustainance of this Life. And therefore Diligence in our particular Calling is not only allowed but enjoyn'd. But then we must beware of prosecuting these lower and momentary Interests with that Intenseness of inordinate Affection that's no way suitable to their Nature and real Value. We must by no means make these our principal Study and Business.

We must not follow them with that anxious Sollicitude and eager Concern, as if they were our principal Interest, and our main Happiness or Misery depended on the Success of them. We must look on them as Matters of comparatively smaller Moment, and consider that we have Affairs of infinitely higher Consequence to mind, upon which our everlasting Welfare depends. We should therefore now look upon them with that Indifference of Mind, with such a mortified Eye and Heart, as we shall most probably do, when the Night of Death comes to end the Labours of the short Day of Life. We should reckon it a Matter of no great Moment and Consequence, what measure of Success our earthly Designs are attended with.

II. Will Death put an End to all the Enjoyments of Life, then we may hence infer,

1. *How low an Estimate we should place on them.*

Honours and Preferments, Riches and Possessions, Pleasures and Delights, are wofully overvalued and too eagerly sought by the most. But Death alone strips the World of its false Disguise and deceitful Charms; and represents it in its native Dress, and instructs us in the true value of it. The Grave shews us the Emptiness and Vanity of it with too undeniable Evidence to leave any Matter of doubt about it. We see there before our Eyes what Mens

admired Pomp and Greatness, Prosperity and Wealth comes to; and of how little Significance and use they are to those that must now leave them all behind, and go as naked out of this World as they came into it. Death brings with it a sensible Conviction, what a madness it is to prefer these perishing Trifles before God and Christ, Heaven and Salvation. Even the Prospect of Death does often, to miserable Worldlings themselves, allay the carnal Pleasures of Life, and dash them with a bitter Tincture. But when Death it self comes to dispossess them of all their transitory Enjoyments, it usually extorts from them a melancholly Confession and Complaint of their despicableness, and makes them cry out, *Vanity of Vanities, all is Vanity.* O then let the foresight of Death have the same Influence upon us, that its near and sensible Approach will have; and let us entertain as contemptuous and mortified Thoughts of all those idolized Vanities, as we shall then certainly have when Death is ready to close our Eyes upon them. Let us not hold those things so fast in our excessive Esteem and inordinate Affection, that Death will so soon, so violently rend and tear us from. Let us rejoice in these things as though we rejoiced not, and possess them as if we possessed them not, as foreseeing that the fashion of this World is passing away, and that their transitory Nature does extremely diminish their Price, and abate their Worth, 1 Cor. viii. 29, 30, 31.

2. Hence we may infer, *How miserable their Case is, whose only Happiness is bound up in these Enjoyments which Death will put an End to.*

And this is the Case of all miserable Worldlings, whose chosen Portion is in this Life. They now value themselves upon their Honours and Dignities, their Wealth and their Pleasures, and think others comparatively wretched and miserable who want these Advantages. But, alas! how soon will Death undeceive them, by shewing them on what a vanishing Gourd (or, rather Shadow) they have placed their Hopes.

For, alas! what Comfort and Relief can all these give against the Agonies and Terrors of Death? Suppose we should come to a dying Worldling, and tell him, "Be of good cheer Man, you have dwelt in a stately House, you have enjoyed a plentiful Estate, you have spent many an Hour in Jollity and Mirth, in Feasting and Dancing, in Pastimes and Sports; may we not expect he would reply, Alas! What are all these to a poor dying Man, that must leave them all behind and can enjoy them no longer! Nay, if we should tell him, "That his Children will enjoy it when he is gone; would he not still reply, "And they must also leave it as well as I: And what will their enjoying it avail me, whose Soul is entering into an Eternal State, for which I have made no Provision, where I must eat and drink and sport no more, whither I can carry none of my beloved Treasures; and if I could, they would signify nothing to purchase the Heavenly Inheritance, or to bribe the avenging Justice of God, and redeem me from the Bonds of Eternal Death!"

O deceitful Happiness, that leaves us when we have the greatest need of Comfort and Support! O forlorn Condition of a dying Worldling, that sees all his vain Hopes of a temporal Felicity wofully disappointed, and has no comfortable Prospect of an approaching Eternity! That must quit this World to which all his Expectations were confined, and enter into that in which he had no Hope or Happiness laid up! And no wonder that to such, Death should appear so terrible!

III. Will Death put an End to all the Evils and Sufferings as well as to the Enjoyments of this Life; let this teach us *Patience under all our present Afflictions.*

We may comfort our selves under them with the Consideration that the Apostle's Expressions suggest,

est, when he calls them *momentary* as well as *light afflictions*. They are but *the sufferings of the [to vñ] time that now is*. We may say of them as excellent *Jewel* did of the *Marian Troubles*, *Hæc non durabunt ætatem*. 'Tis true indeed, this Consideration yields little Relief to wicked Men under their present Calamities. For though Death will put an End to their temporal Sufferings, yet these are to them but the *beginning of Sorrows*. Death may ease them indeed of the Pains of a *distemper'd Body*, but it exposes them to the restless Horrors of an *enraged Conscience*. So that to them 'tis only an exchange of the tolerable Miseries of Earth for the unsufferable Torments of Hell. And, O! how deplorable is their Condition that have so just ground to fear their being Miserable in both Worlds, both *here and for ever*! But to all good Men, 'tis a comfortable Reflexion under their greatest Troubles, that Death will soon give them an effectual Release, will send their *pained Bodies* to the safe *Dormitory of the Grave*, and translate their *Souls* to that *everlasting Rest* that remains for the *People of God*. To them the Grave is a happy *Shelter* from all the Tempests of an unquiet World; 'tis an *invincible Sanctuary*, to which no persecuting Violence can approach. It sets them beyond the reach of all the temporal Evils, they feel or fear. It wipes away all Tears from their Eyes.

IV. Will Death put an End to all the *Sensons and Advantages of Divine Grace* that we may enjoy, let this then teach us, to *value them more, and improve them with greater Diligence*.

How should the awful Thoughts hereof awaken all of us to the greatest Seriousness in all our *Religious Duties*! With what Earnestness and Vehemency would *Ministers* plead with you if they duly considered, that Death will soon silence their Voices, or stop your Ears: If we could learn to speak as *dying Persons* our selves, to those that are *dying* and hastning to an *Eternal State*, O how loudly should we call to impenitent Sinners before they are out of the reach of all our Warnings and Admonitions! How should we preach every Sermon as if it were our *last*, and use as great Importunity with Sinners, as if it were the last Time we had to plead with them! How did it excite *Peter* to stir up his Flock, that he knew he must *speedily put off his Tabernacle*, 2 Pet. i. 13, 14. And how warmly does *Paul* inculcate his Duty on *Timothy*, when he foresaw that the Time of his own departure was at hand, 2 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 6. And how deeply did it affect his Hearers, and dissolve them into Tears, when he told them, *They must see his Face no more*! Acts xx. 38. And sure you would hear with more awful and diligent Attention, and Divine Truths would come with more warm powerful Impressions on your Hearts, if you did seriously consider and foresee how soon Death will put an End to these precious Oppor-

unities, and bring your Day of Grace to a final Conclusion. If you foreknew that after a few *Sabbaths* more are past, your Opportunities of *Hearing, and Reading, and Praying*, would be gone and over for ever; O with what conscientious Care would you redeem and use those invaluable *Seasons*! With how profound Reverence, with what a trembling Heart, with what an awakened Conscience, with how obedient a Soul would you entertain those Calls and Offers of Divine Grace, which for any thing you knew would never be tendred to you more! How far would you be from putting off our Invitations and Counsels with *frivolous Excuses and tedious Delays*! O with what Fervour and Importunity would you *pour out your Hearts in your Prayers*, for Mercy to pardon your Offences, and Grace to heal and sanctify your Natures, if you did apprehend it probable, that this would be the last Time you should ever have access to the Throne of Grace, and that the Sceptre of Mercy should be extended to you! O let then the serious Foresight of Death rouse us out of our Drowsiness and Sloth. Let it prompt us to regard our present Opportunities as an *invaluable Price* put into our Hands, and accordingly quicken us to improve them to the best Advantage. Let it inspire all our publick and private Devotions with due Seriousness and Fervency!

V. Will Death put an End to all our present Opportunities of *Work and Service*, let this quicken us to the greater speed in the dispatch of it.

O let us make use of the *Light of the Day*, that our *Work* may happily end with it, since we foresee there is a *Night of Darkness* hastning upon us, wherein no *Man can work*. Let us, whatever our bands now find us to do for the glory of God, and for the good of others, now do it with all our might, knowing there is no *Work, nor Device, nor Wisdom, nor Knowledge in the Grave, whither we are going*, Eccles. ix. 10. Let not our *Work* go on with so slow and dull a pace, when our *Time* passes on with so winged speed. Let it excite us to the utmost Diligence in the Improvement of our Talents, to foresee that Death will so soon bring us that awful Message, *Give an account of thy Stewardship, for thou mayst be Steward no longer*, Luke xvi. 2. Our Time of *Warfare and Combat, of Labours and Sufferings*, will soon be over; O let us be solicitous to fill it up with all that fruitful Service that will render our great and final *Account* comfortable to us. Let us not give occasion for that bitter Reflexion, "My Time is ended, but my Work is undone. I am come to the conclusion of a short Life, but have not yet entred upon the main Business of it, and am like to die before I have begun to live to any valuable Purpose, in reference to my Soul and its *Eternal Welfare*."

S E R M O N III.

On D E A T H.

Ecclef. vii. 2.

It is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting, for that is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to his Heart.



Have already from these Words made some Progress on this Subject, viz.

That Death, the common End of all Men, should be often and deeply considered by the Living, and the Contemplation thereof should be very instructive and affecting to them.

I have from this Subject,

- I. Treated of Death as abstractedly consider'd.
- II. I have shewn, whence it comes to be the End of all Men.
- III. I have consider'd Death, in the reference it has to our past Life, as the End and Conclusion of it.
- IV. I consider'd Death, in the reference it has to a future Life, as 'tis the Entrance and Passage into it.

And here I shew'd,

1. By Death our dislodged Souls come to live in a State of separation from the Body.
2. By Death they enter into the unseen World, and change their Place as well as their Way of Living.
3. By Death they enter on a State of begun Re-tribution.

Having already spoken to these Three Heads, it remains that I now add some instructive Reflections upon them. And,

I. Will our Souls at Death begin to live in a State of separation from these earthly Bodies.

Then,

1. We may hence infer, *How vastly preferable our Souls are to these earthly Bodies.*

For since they can subsist and live without them; and since upon their leaving them, our *earthly Bodies* immediately lose all *Sense* and *Motion*, and are turn'd to *lifeless Dust*: It plainly appears, That our Souls are the only Principle of *Life* and *Sensation*. So that the *Soul* is properly the *Man*, according to the usual Language of Scripture.

'Tis the *Soul* alone is capable of *Pleasure* and *Pain*, *Happiness* or *Misery*. What we call *bodily Pleasures*, are really the Pleasures that our Souls feel by virtue of their Union with this earthly Body; the Body being only the *Instrument* of them, not the *Principle* that *perceives* or *feels* them. So that the *Body* was made for the use of the *Soul*, as the *Mansion* in which it was to *dwell*, and the *Instrument* of its *Operations* in this present State of *Trial*; but by no Means was the *Soul* made for the *Body*, as if its principal End were only to provide for that. So that to prefer our *Bodies* before our *Souls*, were to value the *Cask* more than the *Jewel*, or the *House*

more than the *living Inhabitant*, or the meer *Instrument* of *Sense* and *Motion* before the noble *Principle* or *Agent* that makes use thereof, or an *organized piece of Clay*, before an *Immortal Mind*, from whom it derives all it seems to have of *Life* or *Action*. And yet how little is this duly considered by the generality of Men, whose Souls seem to be sunk so low into *Flesh* and *Sense*, as to forget their own excellent Nature, and who live as if their Bodies were the only valuable Part of themselves! For those sure can never be thought to prefer their Souls before their Bodies; who evidently enslave the *former* to the *latter*, and use them as if they were only intended to *cater for* and *serve* this *corruptible Flesh*.

And accordingly we may,

2. Farther infer, *How little these Bodies deserve our regard and care in comparison of our Souls!*

So far indeed, as our Bodies are useful Instruments to our Souls, 'tis very fit we should consult their Welfare and Interest. This *earthly Tabernacle* must be kept up in repair while our Souls are lodged in it. We should provide for its necessary Sustainance and Support; and we may lawfully so far use innocent bodily Refreshments, as they tend to fit us for the cheerful Service of God. But to postpone the *Eternal Welfare* and *Happiness* of an *Immortal Soul* to the *poor Interests* of a *perishable Body*, which it must so soon put off by Death, is the most inexcusable height of Folly. To spend all our Thoughts and Time in anxious Cares, how this corruptible *Flesh* shall be *cloath'd* and *adorn'd*, *pamper'd* and *fed*, and furnish'd with all the pleasing Accommodations of this dying Animal Life; while we take no effectual Care, how our Souls shall be beautified with the more valuable Ornaments of Divine Grace, or how they shall attain unto or advance in spiritual Divine Life, or what Provision shall be made for them, when they must live separately from these earthly Bodies, is such an Instance of Stupidity as would amaze us, if it were not so common and every where visible. For what is this but to overlook the most *valuable* as well as *durable* Part of our Nature, as if it were unworthy of our Notice and Care! And yet, alas! How common is it to see Men anxiously concerned to avoid whatever may hazard their bodily Welfare, while they are wretchedly insensible of the Dangers that threaten their precious Souls, and careless of shunning what most apparently tends to their Eternal Ruin. They are impatient under any *Distempers* that hazard their *bodily Health* and *Life*, and spare no Pains and Cost in order to an effectual Cure; but they are not affected with the far more pernicious

pernicious *Maladies* under which their Souls labour, but can with a stupid Patience see them exposed to the dreadful Hazard of dying for ever! And what is this but for a Man to take great Care of *preserving his Garments*, and none of *saving his Life*; to be very solicitous to secure the *Cabinet* while he suffers the inestimable *Jewel* to be thrown away! And, O that such would seriously reflect on the unaccountable Madness and Folly they are guilty of! Alas! Man, that Body which thou so doteest on, and which thy Life and Time is thus wretchedly mispent in providing for, must in a little Time be *put off*, and thrown as an useless unactive Lump into the silent Tomb. Whereas that precious Soul, which thou art so stupidly unconcerned about and forgetful of, is the only durable Part of thy self that will then survive. And wilt thou so value the momentary Interest of a poor animated *Clod of Earth*, which Death will so soon turn unto the Dust from whence it came, as to prefer it before the permanent Interest of a *Soul* that's designed and framed for *Immortality*? This *Flesh* after all thy Pains and Care to preserve and please it, will turn to Rottenness and Corruption; and wilt thou for this, neglect the Welfare of a Soul that must survive to inherit the most unspeakable Happiness or Misery, while thy Body is putrifying in the Grave! Wilt thou thus irreparably lose and undo thy self for ever, for the Sake of that which e'er long will cease to be any *Part of thy self*, which must be *strip'd off* as a decayed Garment, and *abandon'd* as a ruinous House! This is such an Instance of Stupidity and Distraction, as no Words are sufficient to represent, or Tears to deplore.

Therefore farther,

3. We may hence infer, *How necessary a point of Wisdom it is, for the Soul to mortify all inordinate Love of the Body, which at Death it must begin to live without.*

For not only will the Soul's inordinate Love of the Body make the *separation* by Death more *grievous* and *terrible*; but which is far more considerable, it lays the sure Foundation of its durable Misery in its separated State. For when the Soul, by abandoning it self to those low carnal Delights which the Body is the Instrument of, is become, as it were, wholly *sensualiz'd* and *sunk into Flesh*; when its *spiritual Appetite* is entirely *vitiating* and rendered incapable of higher Pleasures, when its *Affections* are thus miserably *debas'd* and *brutify'd*; it can be no other than wretched and miserable in its State of Separation from the Body. Its violent Propension to those bodily Pleasures which it can no longer enjoy, must needs create in it the Torment of *eager but unsatisfied Desires*. And for *Diviner Joys*, it has no spiritual Palate to relish them; they are no way suitable to its debased Affections. Heavenly Delights are too sublime and pure Entertainment for a Soul that has so long wallow'd in the Filth and Mire of impure and brutish Pleasures. So justly does the Apostle represent *fleshly Lusts*, as *warring against the Soul*, by opposing its true Interest and Welfare, *1 Pet. ii. 11*. Since then our Souls must so soon live *without the Body*, let us habituate them now to live *above it*. Let us be moderate and sparing in the use even of lawful bodily Pleasures, and use our utmost Care to prevent their insinuating into, and gradually corrupting our Affections. Let us grow more and more dead to those *sensitive Delights*, which e'er long we must *forego for ever*. For, though these Bodies shall *rise again*, yet it will be with so considerable a *Change* in their Frame and Constitution, that they will no longer be the Instruments of such gross Pleasures as those that now result from the gratifying of their present Cravings and Appetites. What our Saviour speaks concerning one Sort of these inferior Delights in the future Resurrection, we may

apply to all, *There's no marrying or giving in Marriage; no Eating or Drinking, no Feasting and Revelling there*. And shall we suffer our Souls to be entangled and immers'd in the violent Love of those carnal Pleasures which Death will so soon for ever divorce us from? Or should we not rather learn to die to them? Nay, should we not now habituate our Souls to more *spiritual* and *higher Delights*? Such as arise from our Improvement in Divine Knowledge and Wisdom, from our Progress in Grace and Holiness, from our admiring Contemplation of the *Works and Word of God*, and from our intimate Converses with him; from the vigorous Exercise of our gracious Affections towards him, and from the satisfying Discoveries and lively Relish of his Acceptance and Love, and from the believing Prospect of his Eternal Rewards. For these are not only in themselves far more *valuable* and more *satisfying* Delights than any of those which the *Body* is the *Instrument* of, but they are such Delights as will attend the *Soul*, when it shall be divorced from all sensitive ones by being dislodged from the *Body*. Nay, they are such Delights as our perfected Spirits will be more capable to relish, and shall more fully enjoy in that *separated State*. Let us therefore here get our Souls *conaturaliz'd* to those more refined and heavenly Joys that they may not want delightful Entertainment suited to their own spiritual Nature, when all bodily Pleasures shall vanish for ever. Nay, let us now by a course of circumspect Obedience lay in a stock of those solid Comforts that arise from the sweet Reflexions of a good Conscience upon our sincerity in the Service of God. Let us by the Tenour of an upright Life, sow those *Seeds* here which will then *spring up* in everlasting Peace and Joy.

Nay, I may here add, That thus to mortify the inordinate Love of bodily Pleasures, is not only necessary for the Welfare of our Souls, that must by Death quit them for ever; but 'tis also most conducive to the true Interest of our *Bodies* themselves. For if our *Bodies* be defiled by being abused to impure and inordinate Delights; as they are now Sharers with our Souls in the *Commission of Sin*, they are like to be Sharers with them in the *Punishment of it*. If our Souls now abuse them as the Instruments of their *corrupt Appetites and Lusts*, they shall also become the Instruments of their future *Torment and Misery*. Whereas, if we now preserve them, the *pure and undefiled Temples of the Spirit of God*; if we now present them as a *holy living Sacrifice to him*, by employing them in his Service; if we now use the *Members thereof as Instruments of Righteousness to Holiness*, we then entitle our *Bodies* to a *blessed Resurrection*; we do as it were *consecrate* them to a *happy Immortality*. For so much the Apostle intimates when he saith, *That if we, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the Body we shall live; for if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in us, he that raised up Christ from the dead, will also quicken our mortal Bodies through his Spirit that dwells in us*, *Rom. viii. 11, 13*. For that blessed Spirit will *rebuild his own Temples*, and not suffer them to continue always under the Ruins of Death. In a Word, 'tis the chief Interest of our *Bodies* that we should so use them *now*, that when they shall at last *awake out of the sleep of Death*, they may *rise* not to *Dishonour and Shame, Torment and Misery*, but to *Glory and Incorruption, Immortality and Blessedness*. And such glorified Bodies will doubtless considerably encrease the Happiness of our *perfected Spirits*, by being entirely subservient to their highest Operations, and Instruments of more refined and excellent Pleasures than such a gross earthly Body can be.

But,

II. Will our Souls by Death enter into the unseen World, and change their *Place* as well as *Way of Living*.

F f

Then,

Then,

1. We may hence infer, *The great Necessity and admirable Use of Divine Faith.*

To think that our Souls, upon their dislodging from these earthly Bodies, must enter into an *unknown World*, may be apt to amaze and confound them. And 'tis hard so to realize those two *invisible States*, as is necessary to the powerful Excitation of our *Hopes* and *Fears*, in order to our securing the *Happiness* of the *one*, and avoiding the *Misery* of the *other*. We had need then of a lively Faith to represent an *unseen Hell*, in such convincing Evidence as shall effectually warn us to flee from that *Place of Torment*. And we have no less need of that Divine Principle to present an *unseen Heaven* in that satisfying Light, that may both engage us in the vigorous Prosecution of it, and prepare us for a joyful Entrance into it. And as 'tis by this Faith we must now *live*, so 'tis in the Exercise thereof alone that we can comfortably *die*. And accordingly the excellent Use of our Faith, in reference to that future blessed World, is (as one well observes) very fitly illustrated by the Effects of *Abraham's Faith*. Of him we read, *That by Faith, when he was called to go into a Place which he should after receive for an Inheritance, he obeyed, and went out, not knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8.* Now *Abraham's leaving his own Country and his Father's House*, does fitly represent our abandoning this World, and renouncing all our present Possessions and Enjoyments, Comforts and Delights in it, so far as they stand in competition with the *heavenly Canaan*; and his going into an *unknown Land* that he never saw, does as significantly represent our cheerful Resignation of our Souls to his gracious Conduct, when he leads us through the dark and shady Vale of Death, into a World that is to us wholly *unseen* and *unknown*. And such a Faith eminently glorifies God, when it enables us so confidently to rely on his Word and Promise for the Reality and Certainty, the Glory and Happiness of that *invisible World*, that we can joyfully commit our departing Spirits into his Hands, and freely quit this World whenever he calls us to it, that we may enter on the Possession of a better.

And indeed, without such a lively Faith in the Divine Promises concerning that unseen State, our Entrance into it by Death must needs be *uncomfortable*; and we could entertain no other than dark and gloomy Apprehensions of it. Whereas, if once we are thoroughly persuaded of that better World, and assured of our Title to it, we shall be as willing to die, as an *Israelite* wearied with a tedious Pilgrimage through the *Wilderness*, to enter into the *promised Land*. It should be no discouragement that those Mansions above are an *unknown Place of Abode*; it should suffice us, That our blessed Saviour *knows them*, who is gone to prepare them for us, and will admit our departing Souls into them. He is the Lord of the *Invisible World*, Rev. i. 18.

2. Hence we may also infer, *How necessary a point of Wisdom it is to lay up Provisions and Treasures in that unknown World into which our Souls must enter by Death.*

We account this a necessary Instance of Prudence when we remove from one Place to another here on Earth. And sure 'tis more requisite when we must enter into a more durable unseen State. And accordingly our blessed Saviour advises us, *To lay up for our selves incorruptible Treasures in Heaven, &c.* such as are suitable to that permanent State, and not like those of this Earth, that are both perishable in themselves and liable to external Violence, Matth. 6. 19, 20. And to the same purpose the Apostle Paul exhorts us, *to lay up in store for our selves a good Foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold of Eternal Life, Tim. i. 6.* We may then go the more cheerfully to the *Invisible World*, when we have an *unfading Inheritance* reserved and secured there.

But of this more anon.

3. Hence we may also infer, *How needful it is to get the Temper of our Souls suited to that unseen World which Death is our Entrance into.*

If we hope for a happy Admission into the unseen Regions of the Blessed, we should make it our chief Study that our inward Dispositions and Inclinations be, as it were, *Connaturaliz'd* to that unknown State. But if it should be here objected, How can we do this, since the particular Happiness thereof is in so great a Measure unknown to us? I answer, He that perfectly knows it, has in his Gospel recommended to us those *Divine* and *Heavenly Qualities* that will most effectually prepare us for it. And 'tis not improbable but that many of those Graces, the Exercise whereof is required so strictly here, are chiefly useful to train us up for the *Work* and *Joy*, the *Employments* and *Happiness* of our future State. He who knows best what will make us meet for the heavenly Inheritance, has condescended to instruct us herein: And 'tis every way fit that we should comply with his prescribed Terms for the Attainment of that future Blessedness, who so fully understands the Nature of it, and what is requisite to qualify us for the Enjoyment of it.

The severest Rules of *Mortification* and *Self-denial*, which the Gospel prescribes, and the highest Exercises of *Love* to God or Men which it requires, and which may seem too strict and sublime for this present State, should appear most reasonable to us, when we consider how evidently they tend to frame us for the Happiness of a better.

III. Will our Souls by Death enter upon their State of final Retribution, upon the endless Rewards or Punishments of a future Life.

Then,

1. We may hence infer, *How awful and solemn a thing it is to Die!*

What we have represented concerning Death in the former Heads, does indeed shew it to be a great and important Change. If we only considered it as a *Dissolution of this visible Frame of Nature*, and that inflicted as the *penal Fruit of Sin*; if we only regarded it as putting an End to all our worldly Enjoyments and Affairs, to all our *Seasons of Grace*, and *Opportunities of Service*, yet even this it self makes Death appear a Matter of great Moment that should be seriously ponder'd. But when we look farther, and observe the vast Consequences of Death in that ensuing Eternity, which 'tis the *Passage* and *Entrance* into, this gives it a more awful Aspect, and most effectually convinces us how solemn a thing it is to die. 'Tis no less than for an *Immortal Soul* to pass from its State of *Trial* and *Probation*, to its State of *Eternal Rewards* and *Punishments*.

By Death our dislodged Spirits enter on that unspeakable endless Happiness or Misery which their present Choice and Course has laid the Foundation of. They go to reap the Fruit of their sinful or holy Actions, where those Seeds they have here sown, will spring up in everlasting Comfort and Joy, or Horror and Despair. They undergo that particular as the prelude of the general Judgment, by which their unchangeable Doom and Lot is irreversibly determined. They enter into the *Mansions of Eternal Light*, or are shut up in *Infernal Blackness* and *Darkness* for ever. With what serious Concern should we then think of those our last Moments, in which our Souls must take their Flight from hence, and take up their unchangeable Abode in the Society of Angels and glorified Saints, or of Devils and damned Spirits, in the heavenly Paradise, or in the Place of perpetual Torment! To die is no less than to pass thro' the *streights of Time*, and launch out into the vast Ocean of a happy or miserable Eternity. And sure this should appear a most serious and important Matter to those that know or consider what Eternity means.

2. We may hence farther infer, *How advantageous and comfortable, or how dismal and terrible Death is like to be accordingly as we are found prepared or unprepared for it.*

To a holy prepared Soul, there is nothing in natural Death that should appear very grievous or frightful. 'Tis true indeed, the Dissolution of the Union between Soul and Body is in it self an undesirable Evil which our Nature has an innocent Aversion to. But to such a one, the chief Sting of Death, (*viz.* the Guilt of Sin exposing us to everlasting Punishment) is taken away, and the main Bitterness of it removed. Nay, to such a one, Death it self is become great Advantage and Gain, by being made the Passage of the dislodged Soul into a State of blessed Immortality. Death puts off its frightful Visage, and puts on an amiable Aspect, when it comes to release a Saint from the Miseries of this dying Life, and send him to the Happiness of a better. When it comes as the Messenger of our heavenly Father to call one of his Children to their everlasting Home. It does indeed close the Eyes of his Body upon all the vain Objects of Sense and Time, but it opens those of his Soul on the glorious Objects of an unseen Eternity. It calls him from his Conflicts and Labours, from his Work and Service, to his Triumph and Crown, to his everlasting Rest and Reward. It does indeed snatch him from the Embraces of his sorrowful Relations and Friends here below, but it conveys him to far more desirable and happy Society above. It stops his Ears to all their Groans and Sighs, but opens them to the Acclamations and Triumphs of the heavenly Choir. Death translates such prepared Souls from a howling Wilderness to the celestial Canaan; from a vale of Tears to the Mansions of Joy; from a sinful defiled World to the heavenly Jerusalem, into which nothing unclean can enter: Nay, from the Communion of the Church-Militant, (so clouded with Corruptions and Divisions from within, and with Persecutions and Calamities from without) to the Communion of the pure and spotless, the peaceful and concordant heavenly Community. And if Death be attended with such happy Consequences, shall such a prepared Soul be afraid or unwilling to die? Shall it not rather from the lively Exercises of Divine Faith and Hope think with Pleasure of Dying? Even with the like Pleasure that a Prisoner would think of a happy Release, or a weary Traveller of his Rest, or a Sojourner and Stranger of his return to his Native Soil, and to his dear relations, and large Inheritance there? If a Heathen could say, "*Dies iste quem tu tanquam supremum reformidas, Eterni natalis est.*" How much more may a prepared Christian, with the Martyrs, call the Day of his Death, the Day of his Birth; because he then comes out of the dark Womb and Cell of this Earth, into the Light of the superior World.

On the other hand, Death may well appear dismal and terrible to unprepared Souls.

And that not only because Death deprives such of all those momentary Enjoyments and Delights of this Animal Life in which they had wretchedly misplaced their Hope and Happiness, but especially as it is the Inlet of eternal Miseries. To a miserable departing Sinner, Death is the grim Pursuivant, sent by the Justice of God, to drag him to his awful Tribunal, where he must hear the dismal Sentence, *Depart from me ye cursed, &c.* Death makes to such a one an unwelcome Separation indeed, when he sends his Body to the Grave, and lodges his Soul in the Prison of Hell. For such a one to die, is to sink from the possibility, and perhaps, the presumptuous Hope of Happiness, into endless and remediless Misery. 'Tis to exchange the Jollity and Sports, the Pastimes and Reveling of a sensual Life here, for weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth forever. 'Tis to be sent from the Converse of stupid and secure Sinners here, to that of tormenting Fiends, and despairing condemned Spirits: 'Tis to exchange the tolerable Evils of

this wretched Life, for the unsufferable Woes of a dreadful Eternity. Even those that will arise from the gnawings of the Worm that never dies, and the Rage of unquenchable Fire. Sure Death should then appear as the King of Terrors indeed to such unprepared Sinners. And that it does not so to many of them (who die as stupid and senseless as they have lived) is because wretched Unbelief or Inconsideration has clos'd their Eyes from the view of an approaching Eternity; or, because their Minds are under the Power of Self-flattery and Delusion. Whereas, if they had a lively Fore-sight of the terrible Consequences of natural Death, if they truly understood what tremendous Evils they have to fear, while they have nothing good to hope for, they could never look Death in the Face without an appalled Countenance and trembling Heart: The thoughts of dying would fill them with inward Convulsions and Horrors, Amazement and Affright. For, to them, Death is the utter Extinction of all their Hopes, and the Beginning of endless Despair.

3. We may hence farther infer, *How much it is our Wisdom to be prepared for Death, and wherein that Preparation must chiefly consist.*

We may hence see, how necessary a Point of Wisdom it is to be prepared for this awful Event of natural Death.

Since the Issues of it are like to be so important in an ensuing Eternity, it were most inexcusable Folly to be unmindful of them and unprepared for them. It was a dismal Reflection of a great Politician in his Age, *That while he lived he provided for all Things, now he was to die, he was unprovided for that.* Must our Souls upon quitting these earthly Bodies immediately enter on a State of eternal Rewards or Punishments; what should be the principal Business of Life, but a serious effectual Preparation for a comfortable Death and happy Eternity? Those only have lived well that have learn'd the great Art of dying so. Those only have improved Life to any valuable Purpose that have made sure of a happy Immortality. Those only have consulted their true Interest that have secured their everlasting Welfare. All other Wisdom short of this will prove in the End no better then pernicious and destructive Folly.

Nay, hence we may learn wherein our effectual Preparation for Death must chiefly consist.

For since, by Death, our Souls pass from a State of Trial to a State of final Retribution, our best Preparation for it consists in such a Life of Faith, and sincere and persevering Holiness, as the Promises of God have annex'd the heavenly Reward unto. A comfortable and happy Death must be the result of a holy and well-spent Life. Those are best prepared to die, who have by a course of upright and fruitful Obedience laid in a Stock of comfortable Reflections thereon in their last Moments. Those are like to die with the highest Triumphs of inward Joy and Peace, who can give the best Account of the Improvement of their past Time and Life. Those whose Consciences bear the fullest Testimony to their Sincerity and godly Simplicity; those that can say, with Hezekiah, *Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before thee with a perfect and upright Heart, and done that which is good in thy sight,* Isa. xxxviii. 3. Or with the Apostle Paul, *I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my Course and kept the Faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, &c.* 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. If we would then die not only without terrifying Fear, but with comfort and joyful Hope, O let us now learn to live as we shall certainly wish we had done when we come to die. For blessed are those Dead that die in the Lord, that rest from their Labours, and their works follow them.

Let then our Life be such a laborious Service of God, as may give us a comfortable Prospect of entering by Death into that everlasting Rest that remains for

for his People. Let us make those good Works our principal Study and Business, which will follow us into the other World, when all our other Possessions will leave us on this side of it; and will there be the Evidences of our Sincerity, and consequently of our Title to the promised Reward at the Bar of God, and will also be the spring of continual Serenity and Joy in our frequent Review of them. Let us now live the Life of the Righteous that we may also die his Death, and our latter End be like his. For, alas! no other Preparation without this can give us any solid or clear ground of joyful and triumphant Hope. For what reasonable Expectation can he have of a plentiful Harvest that has never sown the Seed? Or he of a glorious Crown that has never vanquished his spiritual Enemies? Or he of Admission into his Master's Joy that has made no Improvement of his Talents? No more can we hope without sowing to the Spirit to reap Eternal Life. No more can we expect the incorruptible Crown without a resolute Conquest.

No more can we hope for our Master's Approbation and Reward without conscientious Fidelity and Diligence. And, O that this were more deeply considered by the generality of Men, so many of whom flatter and delude themselves with a vain and pernicious Hope, that though they have lived ill, they may yet die well; though they have yielded no sincere Obedience to God, they may yet inherit the recompense of it. What should we think of a Steward that should have no better Account to give than this, "Master forgive me that all thy Goods have been embezel'd and mispent. And yet this is all the account that I fear many Thousands rely upon; and if it will not pass at the Bar of God (as 'tis most unreasonable to expect it should) they are undone and miserable for ever. O let us then learn so to improve this State of Trial, as those that foresee, that when Death puts an End to it, we are like to reap the Fruits of our Negligence and Sloth, or Diligence and Care in a happy or miserable Eternity.

S E R M O N IV.

On D E A T H.

Ecclef. vii. 2.

It is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting, for that is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to his Heart.



HERE are but two Things relating to Death, that I would farther consider.

And those are,

V. The Certainty of Death, as the unavoidable End of all Men.

VI. The Time of its coming.

I begin with the former of these, viz.

V. The Certainty of Death, as the unavoidable End of all Men.

And this is a Truth which you will all so readily acknowledge, that to attempt any laborious Proof of it is as needless as to go about to prove that the Light of the day will be succeeded by the Darkness of the night. The living (saith the wise Man, Ecclef. ix. v. know that they shall die. They know it, not only from Divine Revelation, that assures us, 'Tis appointed for all Men once to die, Heb. ix. 27. And that God has decreed, That the Reign of Death over the Race of Mankind, shall be as universal as that of Sin has been (excepting those two rare Instances of Exemption from that Sentence, viz. Enoch and Elias, which the Wisdom of God thought fit to make, to confirm us in the Faith and Hope of a blessed Immortality) but also from the universal and uncontested Experience of all Ages. So that none are so vain as to expect that they shall, by a peculiar Favour and Privilege, be excused from going the way of all the Earth, and becoming at last the Triumph and Spoil of the Grave. Most indeed are prone to flatter themselves with the Expectation of long Life; but none are so foolish as to expect they shall live on this Earth for ever. Even those that put Death and the Thoughts of it the farthest from them, yet know it will come, and that what is the End of all Men will be theirs also. They that see

where their Fathers and Ancestors are gone before them, foresee also that they must e'er long be gathered to them, and with them be enrolled as free among the Dead. They that so often tread upon the Dust of former Generations, can admit of no doubt, but this Generation will also pass off the Stage, and make way for the next to come on and act their part, till the Scene of Time and of this World shall be closed and taken down. We that are almost daily entertained with the Tidings, or with the Spectacles of Mortality, should be stupid and sottish indeed, if we should think our Turn and Change would never come, and Death would never knock at our Door. No, we know, there is no Discharge in that War; there is no Shield can defend us from the fatal Stroke of that last Enemy. He has a Commission from God, the great Disposer and Lord of Life, the Execution whereof no human Power can resist, when he gives the Order, Return to the Dust, ye Children of Men, Psal. xc. 3. When this grim Pursuant of Heaven is sent to fetch the greatest of earthly Potentates from off the Throne, their Persons are no longer inviolable; their swelling Titles and formidable Power are no Protection from his Arrest, and their strongest Guards cannot rescue them out of his hands. And if those earthly gods must yet die as Men; if their Breath must go forth, who can pretend to be excused from the common necessity of dying? Who can hope to be exempted from the unavoidable Lot of all Mankind? Not we sure, that carry the Seeds of Mortality in every part of our frail Constitution: Not we, that in the frequent and violent Shakings of our earthly Tabernacle, have so sensible Warnings of its final Dissolution. So that I may well take it for granted, That you all own it for an undoubted Certainty, that you must die. And, O that

that I could as easily persuade you to consider and improve, as to own so certain, and yet so awful a Truth as this is.

But before I make any practical Reflexions thereon, I shall proceed to offer something concerning the last Thing I proposed to be considered in Death, viz.

VI. *The Time of its coming.*

And in reference to that, there are three Things that chiefly deserve our Consideration, viz.

First, *The Time of our Death falls under the Determination of God, the great Disposer and Lord of Life.*

Secondly, *It will come soon when protracted to the longest ordinary Date.*

Thirdly, *It may come much sooner, being to us wholly uncertain.* Of each of these briefly;

First, *The Time of our Death falls under the Determination of God, the great Disposer and Lord of Life.*

And indeed, 'tis every way fit that he, from whose free Goodness we derive our Life, should by his sovereign Providence appoint the Limits of it; and that we should go out of this World, by his particular Order, by whose Pleasure we came into it. And accordingly, Job tells us. *That Man's days are determined, the number of his Months are with God, that he has appointed his Bounds that he cannot pass,* Job xiv. 15. And again, *Is there not an appointed Time to Man upon Earth? Are not his days also like the days of an Hireling?* Job vii. 1. And I see no good reason, why those and other parallel Passages should be thought to mean no more, than that God has in general set some Bounds to human Life, but not particularly fix'd those of every Man's Life. For what Job here speaks is as applicable to every particular Man, as to Mankind in general, and 'tis particularly apply'd by the Psalmist to himself, when speaking to the God of his Life, he saith, *My Times are in thy Hand,* Psal. xxxi. 15. And 'tis strange that those who own, That no Man does actually die but by God's Disposal and Appointment, should yet deny that the Time of Mens death is fix'd by his sovereign Decree; as if they thought God's providential Administrations were not the Execution of his wise and just Decrees; when the Scripture so plainly tells us, *He works all things according to the Counsel of his own Will;* and known to him are all his Works from the beginning, Eph. i. 11. And 'tis but a weak Objection against this Truth, That if the Term of every Man's Life be determined by the Decree of God, no Man can do any thing to lengthen or shorten it: For this supposes the Decrees of God to be a sort of blind Fate, not the Purposes of a wise Agent, to whose all-comprehending Eye all future Events are open, and who has a due regard to the Glory of his own Nature and Government in all his Determinations and Resolves. And if they mean by Unconditional Decrees, such a blind Fate, I know no Christians that assert any such. He that decreed concerning this or that particular bloody or deceitful Man, that he should not live out half his days, had a regard to his foreseen Crimes in that Determination. So that God's having determin'd the Time, and fix'd the Period of every Man's Life, can be no reasonable Temptation to any Man to neglect the ordinary Means of preserving it, or rashly to expose it to unnecessary hazards. 'Tis no way inconsistent with this Truth, That (as the Scriptures speak, Prov. iii. 16.) *Length of days is in Wisdom's right hand,* and is often the Reward of Piety, *The Fear of the Lord prolonging them,* Prov. x. 27. And that on the contrary, *The Years of the Wicked shall be shortened,* Prov. x. 27. Many are necessary by their own Vices to their own untimely Death, and by their Intemperance and Lust, or other Wickedness, become their own wilful Murderers. For we can infer no more from thence, than that when God decreed a long Life to any particular good Man, he designed also to bestow it as a Reward of his Obedience; and when he purposed to cut off any particular Sinner

in the midst of his Days, he determined to do so as a Punishment of his Wickedness.

We must then consider the sovereign Power of Life and Death, as lodged in the Hands of that God, in whom we live and move, and have our Being. 'Tis he that holds our Souls in Life, and by his (daily) Visitation preserves our Spirits; and if he hide his face we are troubled; if he take away our Breath (by suspending his own quickning Influx) we die and return to our Dust, Psal. civ. 29. He that has appointed the Bounds of our several Habitations, has also determined the Times of our Continuance and Abode in them, Acts xvii. 26. To him, who is the God of the Spirits of all Flesh, it belongs to determine how long our Spirits shall dwell and act in these earthly Tabernacles, and to order when our Dust shall return to the Earth as it was, and our Spirits to him that gave them, Eccles. xii. 7. In a word, he is the Sovereign Arbitrer of Life and Death.

Secondly, *The Time of our Death will come soon when protracted to the longest ordinary Date.*

For as the Providence of God has set Bounds to the Life of Man in general, so those Bounds have been for many Ages much narrower than they were at first, before the World came to be considerably stock'd with Inhabitants. We know that before the Flood, Methusalem's Life extended to Nine Hundred Sixty Nine Years; and after the Flood, both Arphaxad and Salab lived to above Four Hundred and Thirty Years. But as in those that succeeded them, we find a sensible and remarkable decrease of their Years to Two Hundred, and to One Hundred and odd Years, (for Abraham's Age was but One Hundred and Seventy Five) so by Moses's Time, (if the Ninetieth Psalm was penn'd by him, as the Title bears) the ordinary Age of Man was reduced within a much narrower compass. For (saith the inspired Psalmist) *the days of our Years are threescore Years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore Years, yet is their strength, labour and sorrow, so soon passes it away and it is gone,* Psal. lxxxix. 10. And this Experience tells us, has for many Ages been the common Measure and Standard of the duration of human Life, which as but very few in Comparison reach to, so not one perhaps in a thousand go beyond. So that not only might the Psalmist well speak of the Age of Man, *as nothing before God,* Psal. 39. 5. (i. e. when compared with his Eternal Duration: For what is a Cypher to an immense Sum? What is an invisible Point to a boundless Space? What is an imperceptible Moment to more than Millions of Ages?) But even well might he choose the shortest of Measures to illustrate the Brevity of it, *Behold thou hast made my days as an bands breadth,* Psal. xxxix. 5. Though they should be stretched out to the greatest length, yet they would bear to other Measures only the inconsiderable Proportion of an bands breadth. What are Eighty Years themselves, when we come to look back upon them, but like a Tale that has been quickly told; a Meditation or Thought that has suddenly vanish'd; a Dream that is hastily pass'd; a fleeting Shadow, of which we can only have a transient View? Psal. xc. 5, 9, 10. So that the distance is not very great and considerable, between our Entrance on the Stage at our Birth, and our Exit by Death; and we have but a short Part to act thereon. Our Cradles and our Tomb stand not so far asunder as we are apt to represent them. And if the ordinary duration of Life be so short, How near may the most of us account Death to be, after so many Years of Life elaps'd, even supposing we should reach to the utmost usual Extent of it! How are our days swifter than a Post; How do they pass away as the swift Ships (whose Motion is accelerated by their spread Sails, and by the advantage of Wind and Tide) and as the Eagle that hasteth to the Prey? Job ix. 25, 26. With such a speedy and rapid Motion are we carried down the Stream of Time, so

quickly must all of us launch into the Ocean of a boundless Eternity. We scarce sooner feel the Vigour and Strength of Manhood, but e'er we are aware, grey Hairs steal upon us, and the growing Infirmities of our declining Age admonish us, that our frail Nature is tending apace to its appointed Dissolution. So that to all of us Death will not only certainly but quickly come; and it would be most inexcusable Folly to put that (awful) Day far from us.

Thirdly, *The time of our Death is uncertain, so that we know not how soon it may come.*

And no wonder it should be so, when our Times are entirely in the hand of God, and the continuance of them depends on his Sovereign Pleasure. We have no Lease of future Years from the great Lord of Life; we are but Tenants at Will in this House of Clay, and cannot promise our selves one Day's longer Possession of it. We may be turned out in an hour's, in a minute's Warning. No Age of Life is exempted from this inevitable Sentence of Death. Death carries some off the Stage as soon as they have entered upon it, and closes their Eyes as soon as they first behold the Light. Many are hurried from the Womb to the Grave, from the Cradle to the Tomb. In some the Light of Life is extinguished in the first dawns of their reasonable Powers; the beautiful Flowers are nipp'd as soon as they begin to bud and blossom, and the great Hopes conceived of them are disappointed. How many are surprized in their Vigour and Strength by the unexpected, but irresistible Stroke! So that those whom we beheld in the morning, like the flourishing Grass in its Verdure and Pride, we see in the Evening like that cut down and withered, Psal. xc. 5, 6. Our frail Life may be destroyed by a thousand Accidents, which no human Wisdom could foresee or prevent. Death lies in Ambush against us in every Vein and Nerve and Fibre, in all the various Juices of our Body, in all the innumerable Parts of our curious but brittle Constitution, and may make a fatal Assault upon us when we least suspect it. The Seeds of numberless Diseases may be sown in our Bodies, and insensibly grow there, till they break out with a sudden Violence that defies all the vain Attempts of human Art and Skill to stem the Force of. So that he, whom now we see in his full Strength, at ease and quiet, his Breasts full of Milk, and his Bones moisten'd with Marrow, Job xxi. 23, 24. we may see the next Day, nay, the next Hour, groaning under acute Pains, and struggling under the agonies and pangs of Death. So that no Age, no external Condition, no firmness of Constitution, is any security or protection from the sudden Arrest of Death. In the midst of Life we are in Death. As it will come certainly, and shortly, so it may come in a sudden and surprizing manner, the next Day, the next Hour or Moment.

It remains then, that we draw some Practical Instructions from both these Heads, the unavoidable Certainty of Death, and the Time of its coming. And,

First, From both these Heads, I may justly reprove the unaccountable Stupidity of the generality of Mankind, who so seldom think of Death, though they must so certainly, and so shortly, and may so quickly die.

We must certainly die. And how inexcusable Folly then is it, to overlook so important and awful a Change when 'tis so sure and unavoidable? For, if it will come, nothing can be of greater Concern and Necessity to us (as I have already suggested) than to be duly provided for it; we are Happy or Miserable for ever, accordingly as Death finds us in a prepared or unprepared Posture. Now, nothing does so effectually promote our serious Preparation for Death, as the frequent and solemn Fore-thoughts of it. And nothing does more effectually tempt us to the stupid Neglect of necessary Preparation, than the careless or wilful Forgetfulness of it. So that no Man can live as he ought, that does not often remember and consider

that he must die. I have already shewn, to how great Purposes the Contemplation of Death, in its own Nature, in its procuring Cause, in its reference to this Life and to that to come, may be improved. But, alas! we shall never reap these excellent Instructions from that fruitful and affecting Subject, if we have it not often in our Eye.

But how much more inexcusable is it not to think of Death when the Important Change is so near, as well as so sure! If indeed, our Life were protracted like that of the ancient Antediluvian Patriarchs to Seven, or Eight, or nine Hundred Years, it were less wonder if we should, in a great Measure, cast off the Thoughts of Death, and put that evil Day far from us: But when the Term of Life is now so short, when to most of us a considerable part of that Term is already expired, and a few Years are all we can expect, should our Days be protracted to the utmost usual date; for us, I say, very seldom to entertain the serious Thoughts of dying; nay, rather studiously to shun or banish them, is astonishing Stupidity. We do not use to forget any important Events relating to this Life, when we apprehend that they will quickly come to pass. On the contrary, we often revolve them in our Thoughts that we may not be surpriz'd unprovided for them.

But of how much greater Moment and Consequence is Death, the Conclusion of Life, than any of the various Events of it? How much more are we concerned in what will befall us when we die, than we are in any thing that can happen to us while we live! And shall we then wretchedly forget our latter End, when we are every day making such swift Advances towards it? Shall Death be so far from our Thoughts, when, in Point of Time, it can be at no great distance from us?

But above all, 'tis the most amazing Stupidity to think so seldom of dying, when for any thing we know, we may die so soon.

What, shall we be forgetful of Death, who daily meet with so many things to remind and warn us of it? Shall we that daily hear the sorrowful Tidings of the decrease of others, live insensible of our own? Shall we that have so many Spectacles of Mortality so often presented to our Eye, so seldom make any Reflections on our own? Shall the darkness and silence of the Night, never remind us of the obscurity and silence of the Grave? Shall we that so often uncloth our selves, forget the Time, when we must put off these mortal Bodies, and our naked Souls enter into an awful Eternity? Shall the withering Plants and Flowers we so often look upon, never read us an instructive Lecture concerning the Instability and Vanity of human Life? Shall we that see so many drop and fall on our right and left hand, and some of those so much more likely to survive us, never once think that our turn will shortly come? Nay, do we that daily stand upon the brink of the Grave think so seldom of our descending into it? Is Death already laying Siege to us, and attacking out Outworks, seizing an Eye, an Hand, or Foot, and shall we forget that we must ere long become the Conquest of that our last Enemy? Shall so manifold Distempers and Maladies, like violent Storms, shatter the crazy Vessels of our earthly Bodies, and shall we not be apprehensive of that grand Ship-wreck of human Nature, which they are so certain Presages of? Shall we see these Harbingers, and not consider that the King of Terrors is at hand! O marvellous and inexcusable Folly, that Man, while surrounded with so many and so lively Monitors of Death, should so little remember and think that he must die?

But,

Secondly, I would draw more particular Inferences from each of these Heads, And

From the unavoidable Certainty of Death, I would infer,

I. If we must certainly and unavoidably die, we may here see something of the Wisdom and Goodness, as well as Justice of God in this righteous Constitution and Appointment.

We may see something of the tremendous Justice of God. And of this I have already spoken, when I considered, *How Death comes to be the End of all Men.*

I shall therefore, at present, only consider the mixture of Wisdom and Goodness with the Justice and Severity of God, in his appointing all Men once to die.

For not to alledge, how impossible it were to preserve Mankind Immortal in this State of Sin and Corruption, without a continued Series of Miracles; and how incongruous it were that our Life should be perpetual in a State so wretched and miserable, as that of this present World. Not to insist on these Considerations, I shall only suggest, that 'tis every way most suitable to the great Ends of God's Government, that our present State should be Mortal, and that both in respect of the Wicked and the Righteous.

In respect of the Wicked.

For if we duly consider the deplorable Degeneracy and Corruption of human Nature, and to what a dreadful Height it encreases, 'tis evident, that nothing can effectually check the exorbitant Lusts of the most, or prevent the pernicious Effects thereof, but the cutting them off. Even the Wisdom of human Governments sees it necessary by capital Punishments to remove such from human Society, that while they live would be the Pests of it. So did the Wisdom of God see it meet to wash away the abominable Wickedness of the old World, by bringing a Deluge on the defiled Inhabitants of it. Nay, for this End, he so often sends destructive Judgments (such as the Sword, the Pestilence, and the Famine) on the Earth; that he may, by them, lessen the numbers of such profligate Offenders, and warn the rest, and by these Monuments of his Justice, teach the Inhabitants of the World righteousness. And if (as one well observes) the World, notwithstanding all these Restraints, be such a Bedlam, such an Emblem of Hell, what would it be if it were filled with a Race of Immortal Sinners?

And that Man should be Mortal here, is no less congruous, in respect of the Righteous themselves.

For here is nothing in the low Enjoyments of this Earth to be a Reward suitable to the highest Capacities of their reasonable Nature, or the immense Goodness of God. Man was expelled from Paradise, when he was turned into this barren Earth, to instruct him that this is not designed for the State he should be happy in. And indeed, if we suppose this Earth to be made a State of Punishments as well as Rewards, it were hard to conceive how good Men could be very happy in it. For were Sinners punished here according to their Deserts, this Earth would become such an Image of Hell for Misery as well as Wickedness, as would render it a very undesirable Place to live in, and much more unlikely to enjoy compleat Felicity in. How could the Righteous enjoy undisturbed Bliss, when the terrible Instances of Vengeance on the Wicked should be every Moment presented to their Eye, and their Ears filled with the Shreiks of tormented Offenders. So that there seems a necessity of the Righteous and the Wicked being separated, in respect of their Place of Abode, in order to their receiving suitable Rewards and Punishments. And sure it should be an abundant Allay to the Thoughts of Death in the Righteous, when 'tis made the Passage into a more glorious Immortality, and only removes them from this Earth to translate them into the heavenly Paradise. What, though in Adam we all die, when through Christ we all hope to live again! What, though by Man, Death came, when through Man comes the Resurrection of the Dead! What, though Death hath thus reigned by one, over all his defiled

Race, when we that receive abundance of Grace and the gift of Righteousness, shall reign in Life by one Jesus Christ, Rom. v. ult.

II. Must we so certainly die, then we may infer, How much it is our Wisdom to make our effectual Preparation for Death, our first and earliest Work.

And that not only because of the extreme hazard of delaying it (of which I may have occasion to speak afterwards) but chiefly because such an early and effectual Preparation for Death is the most effectual means to prevent the tormenting Fear of it, and support us under the certain Prospect of it. For really did but Sinners duly consider the inevitable Certainty of Death; did they as seriously ponder, as they undoubtedly know they must die, the awful Thoughts hereof would haunt them where-ever they go; they would dash all their carnal Pleasures with a bitter Tincture, and their terrifying Fear would indeed render their whole Life a deplorable Bondage. So that all the seeming Ease and Peace they enjoy in their sinful Life, is wholly owing to their insensibleness of Death; they tremble not at this unavoidable Danger, because they wilfully shut their Eyes upon it. But, alas! how stupid Folly is this, when our casting off the Thoughts of Death can no way prevent the approach of it; and our wretched forgetfulness of our great change can no way exempt us from the necessity of undergoing it. Besides, there are so many occasions to remind the securest Sinners of dying, that 'tis hard for them always to keep off the unwelcome Thoughts of it! And, alas! how terrifying and frightful are those ungrateful Thoughts! when they present to the Sinner's Eye, the Sentence of Mortality, as it were engraven on the Walls of this House of Clay, That his days are numbered and finished. How quickly does this spoil all his Jollity and Mirth! How does it fill his Countenance with Paleness and Terror, his Joints with trembling, and his Heart with more terrible Convulsions and Fears? Dan. v. 6. How are such surprized when (as one well speaks) Death comes in view, and shews his Scythe, and only a few Sands at the bottom of the Glass. And yet such Consternation and Fear would be the continual Entertainment of Sinners, if they did but, as they ought, consider the Truth of their Case; That they must unavoidably die, and yet are absolutely unprepared for it.

How much then is it our Wisdom to prepare for Death betimes, since then we may upon reasonable and solid grounds live without the tormenting Fear of it, even though we foresee its certain approach. He does not live like a considerate Man, that lives without the serious Fore-thoughts and Prospect of Death. And he only can entertain such a Prospect of it without Terror and with rational Comfort, who is habitually prepared to die, who has secured his Peace with God by a sincere and penitent Return to him through Jesus Christ, and who is by his sanctifying Grace made meet for a blessed Immortality. And what need he fear, that is not, upon solid Consideration, afraid to die! And how evidently does he most truly enjoy the desirable Comfort of Life, who is thus rais'd above the anxious and tormenting dread of Death! So miserably are those mistaken that look upon the early Thoughts of Death, and care of providing for it, as if it were a tormenting themselves before the Time. Whereas, those only lay the stable Foundation of as happy a Life as can be expected here, who take so effectual a course to be secured against the most terrible of all present Evils, nay, to whom Death it self is apprehended as a safe Retreat from all the Calamities and Miseries of this Life, and Inlet into the perfect Felicity of a better. Whereas, to Sinners, under the bitterest Afflictions of this Life, Death it self (which alone could relieve them) is far more dreadful, as it consigns them to a State of Misery and Woe unspeakably more dismal and remediless. If then we must die, let us betimes begin

to live as we shall wish we had done when we come to die; and then our Life will not be embittered with the Apprehensions and Prospect of this inevitable necessity of dying.

III. Must we certainly die, we may then see, 'Tis a matter of unspeakable importance and moment, to die well.

Since we must die, whether we will or no, nothing concerns us more than to be secured against whatever is terrible and frightful, and to be ascertained of whatever may be a comfort and advantage to us in Death. Since this vast and awful Change will come, we had need see that it be to us a happy and joyful, not a dismal and miserable one.

But having had occasion to suggest something of this kind before, I shall not now enlarge upon it.

IV. Since Death is so certain and unavoidable, This should prevent our over-valuing of this present Life.

For since 'tis a Life we must certainly forego some time or other, it ought not to be over-rated, or set in the Ballance against any Interests that refer to a blessed Immortality. We that must part with it, should think it no great matter to loose it the sooner, for securing the Happiness of Life Eternal whenever we are called to it. We that must die should be so far from repining to die in the cause of God when he requires it, as rather to account that to be a peculiar Honour put upon us, that we may die as the Witnesses of his Truth.

But because this Argument is the stronger on supposition of the brevity and uncertainty of human Life, I shall not enlarge upon it.

But,

From the Time when Death will come, we may draw several Inferences. As,

First, From the Time of our deaths falling under the Determination of God, the great Disposer and Lord of Life, we may infer,

I. This should suppress in good Men all inordinate Fears of sudden Death.

It should be a great satisfaction to our Minds, under all the Uncertainties and Hazards that our frail Life is exposed to, That our Times are in God's hand, and to him the Issues and Escapes from Death do belong, Psal. lxxviii. 20. We are sure, we shall never die, but when he pleases; If the hairs of our head are numbered by him, much more are the days of our lives, so that we may be sure of living as long as he has any Work or Service for us to do; and that is as long as we should desire, his Service being the only valuable End we can live for. We should therefore, with chearful Confidence, resign our selves to his Disposal, being chiefly concerned that he may be magni-

fied in us, whether by Life or Death, and that in the one or the other we may be accepted by him. See 2 Cor. v. 8, 9, &c.

II. This Consideration should restrain all repining Thoughts at the death of our Relations and Friends.

'Tis fit that he should dispose of them as he pleases, who is the absolute Lord of Life and Death. He has a higher Right and Interest in them than we can pretend to, and to murmur at what he does, is either to dispute that Right, or to arraign his Wisdom, or Justice, or Goodness, in the management of his sovereign Dominion and Power. And we should, with pious Job, Bless his Name (think and speak honourably of him) when he takes away as well as when he gives, Job. i. 21.

III. Hence we may see, How gross Folly it is for Sinners to trifle with the Patience of God, and provoke his Justice, by presuming upon longer Life.

For 'tis evident, they presume on what is in his Power, and not in their own. And, alas! How common is this! How many are there, that now slight the Offers of the Mercy and Grace of God, and turn a deaf Ear to all his earnest Calls to Repentance! How many go on securely in a course of Sin, not that they dare think or resolve to do so always, but because they presume they may venture upon it for a while, having a rational Prospect (as they conceive) of living much longer. But, alas! how little do such duly consider, That their Life is in his hands, and absolutely at his sovereign Disposal, whose marvellous Mercy they thus despise, whose awful Vengeance they thus incense, and whose great Forbearance they thus abuse! And darrest thou thus, inconsiderate Wretch, provoke the God of thy Life, and dally with his Patience, on whom the continuance of it every moment depends? And what can more incense him to cease the Exercise of his Forbearance, than to have it thus perverted from its true End? What can provoke him more to cut short the Term of thy Life, than that thou thus encouragest thy self in a course of Disobedience from the prospect of its longer Duration! Nay rather, how much more reasonable is it for thee to infer, That if thy Life be in the hands of God, and he can every moment stop thy Breath, it were madness in thee to trifle any longer with him? 'Tis infinitely dangerous to abuse his Forbearance, and the Riches thereof ought to lead thee to a speedy Repentance. Thou canst then only expect his gracious Care for the preservation of thy Life, when thou employest it in his faithful Service; and thou givest him the utmost provocation to cut it off, when thou dost wilfully alienate it from him.

S E R M O N V.

On D E A T H.

Eccles. vii. 2.

It is better to go to the House of Mourning than to the House of Feasting, for that is the End of all Men, and the Living will lay it to his Heart.



THE last Thing I proposed to consider concerning Death, was,
VI. *The Time of its coming.*

As to this, I proposed these three Heads to your Meditation.

First, The Time of our death falls under the Determination and Conduct of God, the great Dis-

poser and Lord of Life.

Secondly, It will come soon when protracted to the longest ordinary date.

Thirdly, It may, nay, most probably, will come much sooner, being to us wholly uncertain.

I have briefly spoken to each of these Heads, and have already made some practical Reflexions upon the First of them.

I proceed now to make some Reflexions on the Second and Third Heads.

Secondly, Will the Time of our death come soon, when protracted to the longest ordinary date? Then,

I. Hence we may see the Wisdom of God in shortning the ordinary Term of human Life.

For we are so far from having any just reason to complain of the Conduct of Divine Providence therein, that on the contrary we have the highest reason to admire and approve it.

'Tis true indeed, it was congruous to the Wisdom of God, that the Lives of Men should be ordinarily prolonged to a much more considerable date at first, in order to the speedier peopling of the World. But when it was considerably stock'd with Inhabitants, the State of it plainly required a much quicker Succession, and consequently that the ordinary Term of human Life should be reduced to so narrow a compass. For (as one well observes) if all our Ancestors who lived Two or Three Hundred Years ago, were still alive, and possessed of their old Honours and Estates, much more all that lived Five, Six or Seven Hundred, or near a Thousand Years ago, the World would have been long ago overstock'd; and where there is one poor Man now, there would be Five Hundred, unless all were reduced to the same Level, which those, to be sure, would be most unwilling to admit, who are most prone to complain of the present shortness of Life.

Besides, such a longer Term of Life is no way desirable or advantageous either in respect of the Wicked or the Righteous.

Not in respect of the Wicked; for if the Thoughts of Death and Eternity have so little effect upon them to restrain them from the pursuit of their Lusts, when they imagine them to be at so great a distance as Thirty or Forty, or Fifty Years; How much more ineffectual would they be, if they appeared at so remote a distance as that of Four or Five Hundred,

or near a Thousand? How would the great Things of the other World lose all their Impression, if they look'd on them as so far off, almost out of their view? Nay, if in so few Years they arrive to such a dreadful height of Sin, what Monsters of Wickedness would they be, should they live to Eight or Nine Hundred Years? And therefore, 'tis not an improbable Conjecture, that the long Lives of the Inhabitants of the World before the Flood, greatly contributed to that amazing prodigious Corruption and Wickedness which brought so terrible a Destruction upon it.

Nor is it desirable or advantageous, in respect of the Righteous; for if their present State be miserable, and exposed to Persecution, how violent a Temptation to Apostacy would the prospect of so long continued Injuries and Sufferings be? If it be prosperous, how much more difficult would it be to resist the alluring Temptation of those Pleasures of Sin, which we have a prospect of enjoying so long? How much more dangerous a Snare would the enticing Preferments and Riches of the World be, and much harder to escape? Nay, if we did effectually resist its insinuating Blandishments and Charms, how little desirable were it for a truly good Man to be so long kept in a State of Warfare, and engaged in continual Conflicts, and so long detained from the Crown that he aspires unto? How unwelcome would it be, to have his Time of laborious and painful Service protracted, and to be kept so long from his desired everlasting Rest? To all such as understand the true use of this Life, as 'tis a State of Trial preparatory for a better, 'tis sufficient, that our Lives are long enough for all the valuable purposes we live for. Long enough to attain the saving Knowledge of God and Christ, whom to know is Life Eternal; Long enough to get our Peace with an offended God, secured by a sincere Conversion to him; Long enough to get our Nature renewed and changed, and by sanctifying Grace made meet for the Glory and Happiness of the future State; Long enough to express our Fidelity to God, by the Conquest of Temptations, the Mortification of our Lusts, and by our sincere Endeavours to promote his Glory and Interest, and the present and eternal good of others committed to our charge; Long enough to work out our own Salvation. In a word, this Life is long enough for a Race and a Combat, for a Journey and Pilgrimage, for a State of Discipline and Probation; and had we more realizing Views of the transcendent Glory and Happiness of a better, we should rather think our living longer an Exercise of our Patience, than a fit Object of our Wishes, and should with the devout Apostle, desire to depart and be with Christ, as accounting it infinitely better to be in those Mansions of Light and Joy with him, than to abide in this Vale of Tears,

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this State of uncomfortable Darkneſs and Diſtance from him.

So little reaſon have we to repine, that the ordinary Term of human Life is ſhortned; ſo much reaſon rather to applaud the *Wiſdom of God*, that has ordered it, upon ſo juſt Reaſons, and for ſo valuable Ends.

II. Will the Time of our Death come ſoon, when protracted to the longeſt ordinary date, then we may learn, *How little proportion ſo ſhort a Life bears to Eternity*, and how unreaſonable it is that the momentary Interests of the one ſhould ſtand in competition with the durable Interests of the other.

Alas! ſhould we live to Seventy or Eighty Years, what are thoſe compared with an endleſs Duration! They are but like a Cypher to an immenſe Sum, or an imperceptible Point to a boundleſs Space. How quickly are they gone and paſt, even before we are well aware? But for an enſuing Eternity, how does it amaze and confound our Thoughts, how are our Minds ſwallowed up and loſt in the Contemplation of it! What an unſpeakable Addition does it make to the Miſery or the Happineſs of that State which by Death we enter upon! What then are the momentary finful Pleaſures of ſo ſhort a Life, that they ſhould be either valued above the permanent Joys of a bleſſed Immortality, or that we ſhould for the enjoyment of them, venture upon the remedileſs Torments of an endleſs State! What are the periſhing Honours or Treasures of this World, which we muſt in a few Years be diſpoſſeſſed of, that for the gain of theſe we ſhould barter away the Hopes of an incorruptible Inheritance and unfading Crown; nay, for theſe loſe an Immortal Soul! Nay, on the other hand, What are the Miſeries and Sufferings, the Labours or Conflicts of ſo ſhort a Life (that the moſt ſerious and ſtrict Practice of Religion can expoſe us to) that we ſhould not think them infinitely outweighed by the Glories and Joys, the Perfection and Bleſſedneſs of an Eternal State! So that if we give the ſtrongeſt Temptations to Sin the moſt advantageous proſpect and view, and conſider the Diſcouragements that attend the Practice of Holineſs in their moſt frightful appearance, yet one ſerious Thought of Eternity, and the durable Rewards and Punishments thereof, is ſufficient to make thoſe Temptations appear deſpicable; and thoſe Diſcouragements to appear inconſiderable in the Judgment of a Mind inſpired with the ſerious Belief of Inviſible Things. For ſuch a Faith will ſhew us the difference between Time and Eternity to be ſo vaſt, that 'tis madneſs to pretend to ſet the Concerns of the former in competition with the latter, and much more to give them the Preference. Of how little importance is it, how we ſhall live a few Years (in point of ſenſual Delight and Eaſe) in comparison of our Living in endleſs Happineſs and Miſery!

But,

III. Will Death come ſo ſoon when longeſt protracted, *How juſtly may this reprove thoſe who are prodigal of ſo ſhort a Life!*

And, alas! How great a part of thoſe that are moſt apt to complain of the brevity of human Life, yet miſerably ſquander it away, as if they thought it too long. If they would but ſeriously review how they have ſpent the paſt part of it, alas! they would ſoon find, that the moſt of their Time is not only gone, but (which is worſe) is loſt and thrown away. And ſure we may well reckon that part of our Time and Life loſt that turns to no valuable Account, which we are no way the better for, in Body or Soul; which we can look back upon with no inward Peace and Serenity in our own Minds, with no hope of God's Approbation and Reward. And much more is that part of our Time and Life woefully loſt, that is wretchedly miſpent in the Service of our Luſts, to the diſhonouring of God, the deeper debaſement of our Souls, and the wounding of our Conſciences. That part of our Life is ſadly loſt indeed which we cannot review

without Shame and Confuſion, Horror and Dread, which we would be glad to forget, or even blot out of our Account. And yet, alas! how many are there, who, as ſhort as they think their Lives are, have thus miſerably thrown away and loſt a conſiderable part of them. So that the Sum of their Account is, So much ſpent in the Follies of Childhood and Youth, ſo much in Eating and Drinking and Sleeping, ſo much in Paſtimes and Sports, ſo much in extravagant Jollity and Mirth, ſo much in impertinent Viſits, and unprofitable Talk, ſo much in adorning and pampering their Bodies; nay, ſo much perhaps in Chambering and Wantonneſs, in Revelling and Drunkenneſs; ſo that there is ſcarce any part of their Life that they themſelves dare put into the Account, with any expectation it ſhould paſs when their great Judge ſhall call them to an Audit, and enquire how their Life has been ſpent. And do ſuch indeed ſeriously believe, That their Life is ſo ſhort, when they are ſo careleſs to improve it to the only valuable Ends of living? Or do they believe, That Death will come ſo ſoon, when they are ſlow in making any effectual Preparations for it? But,

IV. Will Death come ſo ſoon when longeſt deferred, then, *How extreme is the Folly of thoſe who, though they cannot expect to live much longer, yet are as full of buſy Projects for this World, and as unconcerned about another, as if Death were at the greateſt diſtance from them.*

We know that Seventy or Eighty Years is the common Period of human Life, yet how many are there who are come very near to this ordinary Term of Life, who yet are ſo far from being awakened by that near Proſpect of dying to ſerious effectual Proviſion for it, that on the contrary, the nearer they come to the other World, the more deeply are they entangled in the buſy Cares of this; and the leſs need they have of earthly Treasures, for the ſuſtenance of this Life, the more eager and intent they are upon the purſuit of them. Even a Heathen Moralift could juſtly reproach ſuch Covetouſneſs as a moſt intolerable Folly in old Age, in which yet Men are often moſt ſubject to it; for what is this (ſaith he) but, *Quo minus reſtat via eo plus vitæ quærere*, the leſs of our Journey remains, to carry a greater Load and Quantity of Proviſions. Strange, to ſee thoſe, ſo eager to add Field to Field, and Houſe to Houſe, who have already one Foot in the Grave, and muſt ſo ſoon need no other Poſſeſſion but that of a Burying-place! To ſee thoſe lay buſy Deſigns for many future Years, that are juſt dropping into the Duſt! To ſee thoſe ſo eagerly courting and purſuing the World, that cannot but know they muſt leave it ſo ſoon, as if they never expected to have enough of this Earth, till they are ſunk and buried in it! Nay, to ſee thoſe, through their reſtleſs ſollicitude for this World, unmindful of an awful Eternity, who ſtand upon the brink of it, and are juſt ready to be ſwallowed up of it! To ſee thoſe ſet Death at a great diſtance from them in their own Thoughts, whom it has long dogg'd at the heels, and is juſt come up with them, and ready to give them the fatal Stroke! O amazing Stupidity, and moſt inexcusable Folly! How much more would it become all ſuch that are come ſo near to the Conclusion of this Life, to diſveſt themſelves of the anxious Cares of it, and when Death cannot be far off, to make the more ſolemn Preparation for it! And, alas! the caſe of thoſe who have deferr'd all Preparation for Death till then, is next to hopeleſs and deſperate! For what comfortable Account can they expect to give of their paſt Life, who have no other to give than this, *That 'tis all miſpent and loſt?* But even for thoſe that are habitually prepared, yet the ſerious conſideration of the near Approach of Death ſhould engage them to greater Diligence in their actual Preparation for it. They that ſtand on the Conſines of both Worlds, ſhould turn their Eyes more from that which they muſt

must so soon leave, and fix them more intensely on the other World, which they are just entering upon. They should be more strictly reviewing those Accounts which they must so shortly give up; They should be retiring oftner from this World to converse with God and their own Souls; They should habituate themselves more by frequent acts of Devotion to the Employments and Work of the heavenly State; They should strengthen their Faith and Hope, in order to their successful Conflict with and Victory over their last Enemy; They should employ the short Remainder of Life to the best advantage for a safe and comfortable Death.

V. Will the Time of Death come so soon, *How careful should we be to improve what remains of so short a Life in the Service of God!*

For the whole of our Life is due to him, and we only properly live that part of our Time, which we employ in glorifying him by the Duties of our *general or particular Calling*. Alas! a considerable Part of our Life is spent before we come to the regular use of our reasonable Powers. And after that, how much of our Time is unavoidably taken up in *Eating and Drinking, and Sleeping*, and what is necessary for the Refreshment and Support of our frail Nature! So that 'tis but a small part of Life that we are capable of laying out in the Service of God, in order to our Preparation for a peaceful Death and happy Eternity. O how much then is it our Wisdom to *live betimes*, that even our early Years may come into the Account of our Lives, as being sincerely devoted to God! How fearful should we be to alienate any more of our Life from him, since all that part of it that has been so, we can look upon no better than *lost*, and must be forced to *disown* it! How industrious should we rather be to redeem what is lost by greater diligence in the Improvement of what remains, that we may live *much* in a *little Time*, by being more active and zealous for the glory of God, more unwearied in doing all the good we are capable of, more *abounding in every good Word and Work*, more diligent in our Endeavours to make an eminent Proficiency in Wisdom and Grace, and to grow in our meetness for the heavenly Glory. For as the blessed God does most justly claim and highly deserve that our whole Life should be thus employed, so this will enable our selves to give up the most joyful Account of it, and to meet Death without that Anguish and Terror that those must needs do, who can look back on very little of their short Life employed to the only valuable End they ought to have lived for.

But,

Thirdly, May we die much sooner; nay, shall we most probably die before we arrive to the utmost ordinary Period of human Life; and is the Time of our dying to us wholly uncertain? Then,

I. We may see the *Wisdom and Goodness of God*, in concealing from us the Time of our Death, and leaving us at such utter uncertainty about it.

I know indeed, our Curiosity to pry into *future Events*, particularly prompts us to desire the Knowledge of this. But God has in Wisdom and Mercy hid it from us. If all that are to die soon could certainly foresee it, what an Interruption would this give to the Affairs of this Life! And what a stop would it be to the Industry of a considerable part of Mankind, besides all the Bondage that such would be held in from the Apprehensions of Death so near to them! But on the other hand, if all that shall live to Age certainly foreknew it, how prone would they be to over-love this World, and forget the Concerns of that to come? How strongly tempted to delay their *Repentance*? How would the View of Eternity, at so great a distance, weaken the Influence of those great Motives drawn from the *Happiness and Misery* of that unseen State? For if most abuse the uncertain Hopes of long Life to this purpose, how much more would they abuse the certain *Foreknowledge* of it?

Whereas, the Uncertainty of Life keeps those great Things in a nearer and more affecting View. But this leads me to add,

II. If Death may come much sooner, and we, none of us, know how soon, *We ought instead of rashly presuming upon long Life, to live in the continual Expectation of Death.*

We should by no means presume upon living to the longest ordinary Extent and Term of Life. For this were to promise to our selves, what we have no ground to expect, and what others have before us been so often deceived in their Hopes of. When so very few attain to a considerable Age, when the most die much sooner, what ground can we have to reckon upon living to Seventy or Eighty Years? Is it because we are young, or because our Constitution is at present healthful and strong? And have we not seen Thousands die in their blooming Years, and when their Constitution seemed most hail and vigorous? Is it because we see some live to a great Age? But are there not far more that are cut off in the midst of their days; and have we any security that we shall reach that Term of Life, which so few arrive to? Can we, whose frail Nature is liable to so manifold *Diseases from within*, and to a thousand *Accidents from without*, and that are daily surrounded with the Spectacles of Mortality abroad, and with frequent Warnings of it in our selves, reasonably flatter our selves with the Hope of long Life? And, alas! little do the most consider the pernicious Effects of these flattering Hopes. For 'tis Men's rash presuming on this, that so often encourages them to delay the great and necessary Work of serious *Repentance*, which they imagine they may safely adjourn several Years hence, nay, to the declining part of their Life. When Men are convinced of the absolute necessity of abandoning their Sins and returning to God, in order to their escaping his remediless Vengeance, they have no other way so ready to elude the force of such Convictions, as this, That they vainly conclude, *They have yet time enough before them*. They are but just entered into the World, and are now in their youthful Heat and Vigour. And now they think is the proper Time for Mirth and Pleasure: Now they may venture to indulge their youthful Inclinations, and taste the Sweets of Sin, and the Delights of the World. Death and Judgment are a great way off, and 'tis time enough to think upon them, when the Strength of Manhood is past, and *grey-hairs* are coming upon them. Nay, if we urge them to serious *Repentance* by Arguments drawn from the other World, from the Happiness and Misery of a future State, how does their Presumption upon a long Life, weaken the force of them, by representing those Things at a *great distance* from them! They think they may at present enjoy the Pleasures of Sin, and give way to the gratification of their sensual Lusts, and yet find Time enough to escape the Miseries, and secure the Blessedness of a future State. And thus, by the flattering Hopes of living to Age, they are encouraged to go on in Sin till they become *hardened* in it, till their vitious Habits are so rooted, that it can as little be expected that they who have *thus accustomed themselves to do Evil should learn to do well, as that the Ethiopian can change his Skin or the Leopard his Spots*, Jer. xiii. 23. And hereby they are also encouraged to put their Salvation to a most desperate venture, it being as highly probable the Time they have prefix'd for their *Repentance* will never come, as it is, that, if it should come, they will have as little Inclination to repent as they have now, or rather far less. So dangerous is it to the most to flatter themselves with the Expectations of living long.

On the contrary, 'tis our Wisdom to live in continual Expectation of Death.

We should be so far from promising to our selves many future Years, as not to promise our selves one Year;

Year, one Week or Day, because we have no certainty of living so long. Nor that I here suppose, That we should so expect Death, as to believe every day, that we shall die that very day; for we have no ground to believe so, and indeed no Man in his Health and Strength can reasonably entertain such a Persuasion: But I mean, That we should so continually expect Death, as to consider that we may die this very day, and never live to behold the Light of another. And we should maintain always such a cautious Sense of our danger, as may engage us to live as we shall wish we had done when we come to die. We should live in that constant Expectation of Death that may quicken us to effectual Preparation for it. We should not dare to defer the great Work of securing our Peace with God one day, one hour longer; as considering that Death may prevent us in our wretched Delays. We should not venture upon any wilful Sin, as considering that Death may surprize us in the commission of it. We should diligently attend our Master's Work, and not give way to our Negligence and Sloth, as considering that while we loiter, while we slumber and sleep, he may come upon us unawares. We should be in that watchful Posture for the coming of our Lord, that may prevent our being found unready and unprepared. And *blessed are those Servants whom their Lord when he comes shall find thus watching*, Luke xii. 37.

But this leads me to add,

III. If Death may come upon us, we know not how soon, then *'Tis extreme Folly to defer our necessary Preparation for it.*

If you ask what that *necessary Preparation* is, I answer, We are then Habitually prepared to die, when upon our sincere Faith in Christ, as our Mediator, and unfeigned Repentance towards God, we are restored to his Favour, and become entitled to a blessed Immortality. And we are then actually prepared, when we are found in a continued course of sincere and circumspect Obedience, having our Evidences for Heaven clear, and living in the believing and joyful Expectation of the Glory and Happiness thereof.

Now, I say, 'tis extreme Folly to delay this necessary Preparation for Death, as will appear if we consider,

1. That hereby we run a manifest hazard of being surprized by Death, unprepared for it.

2. That our dying Moments are no proper Time to make any such Preparation.

3. And if Death find us thus unprepared, our Case is hopeless for ever.

1. Hereby we run a manifest hazard of being surprized by Death, unprepared for it.

For who can promise himself that he shall live to that future Time, to which he adjourns this great and important Business? What security has any Man, that if he defer it to the next Year, or Month, nay, the next Day, he shall live till that Opportunity and Season comes? Does any Man doubt but he may die before another Year or Day comes? What then is the meaning of his foolish Delays, but that he's content to run that risk of dying unprepared, and intends to make no Preparation at all, unless his Life be protracted so long, i. e. he will suspend his Eternal Welfare on a meer uncertain Condition; he will put it off to a Time that may never come; he will defer it to that part of his Age which he may never reach unto. And would any Man that's sober and considerate, do so in any matter of considerable Moment and Consequence relating to his worldly Interest? And yet how many Thousands are guilty of this Folly, in reference to the more important Concerns of their everlasting State! They trifle and loiter, they defer and put off, till Death steals upon them unawares, till Eternity comes with an unlook'd for and unwelcome Surprize. And then they look back on their own Folly with Consternation and

Anguish, and usually with just Horror and Despair. For,

2. Our dying Moments are no fit Time to make any such Preparation.

And yet I fear, so many would not delay it so long, but that they think it sufficient Preparation for Death, if they have so much warning of its Approach, as with a few dying Sighs and Groans to confess their Sins, and beg pardon for them, and so cast themselves on the Mercy of God. Now, besides, That no Man can promise himself so much as this, for Death may as easily surprize him with so sudden or so severe a Stroke, as shall give him no leisure, or leave him in no capacity of doing so much as this; so that if one Prayer for Mercy, with his dying Breath, would prevent his Eternal Ruin, he shall not be able to offer it up; I say, besides this, such ought to consider, that they have no ground to hope that such a Death-bed Preparation will be of any signification. For, alas! how usually do the Sorrows and Agonies of such dying Sinners spring only from servile Fear, not from any real change of their Hearts. They are merely extorted from them by the terrible Prefaces of an awakened Conscience, that foresees their approaching Misery, and feels some Fore-tastes of future Vengeance in its own guilty Horrors. Their Repentance is usually no more than that of a Malefactor, that is sorry he must die. And, alas! what reason have such to expect God will take any notice of their dying Cries? Will the Master of the Vineyard give the Reward to those who, when the Time of the Work is over, come and profess they are sorry they did not labour in it? Or have they not all possible reason to expect that God will then be as deaf to their Supplications for Mercy, as they have been to his Calls to Repentance and Offers of Pardon? May they not see a true Emblem of their Case in profane Esau, of whom we read, *That having for one morsel of Meat sold his Birth-right, when he would have inherited the Blessing he was rejected, for he found no place for Repentance, though he sought it carefully with Tears; i. e. he could not prevail with his Father to change his Mind, and alter his Purpose, though he earnestly besought him.* Now such dying Sinners, like Esau, have sold their heavenly Birth-right for the momentary and sordid Pleasures of Sin. And now when they come to implore God's Blessing and Mercy, they will find themselves rejected: They will not be able to alter the Thoughts and righteous Sentence of God concerning them, even though they should seek it with Tears: They will find the Door of Mercy shut upon them, though they should never so loudly and so earnestly cry, *Lord, Lord open to us.* And shall we be guilty of so inexcusable, so extreme Folly, as to put our Souls and their Salvation, our endless Happiness or Misery, on so hopeless, so desperate an Issue as this? And yet,

3. If Death find us thus unprepared, our Case is indeed hopeless for ever.

For as Death leaves us, Judgment will find us. As the Tree falls, so it must lie. There is no Work nor Devotion, no Knowledge or Wisdom in the Grave whither thou goest, Eccles. ix. 10. So that whatever thou hast to do by way of Preparation for Death and Eternity, must be done now or never; and, alas! who can conceive the Horrors of such an unprepared Soul when it stands on the brink of Eternity! When the Sinner cannot live, and yet trembles to think of dying! When he cannot look backward, but the guilt of a Life spent in Sin and Folly stares him in the face; nor forward, but a miserable Eternity appears in his view. When he must leave this Earth, whether he will or no, and sees not only the Grave, but even Hell it self, opening its Mouth to receive him, and beholds himself sinking from all Hope, all possibility of Mercy and Salvation, into dismal everlasting Despair, into a bottomless Abyss of remediless Woe.

But

But this leads me to add,

IV. That 'tis our necessary Wisdom to improve our present Time in serious Preparation for Death.

For since our Preparation for Death is a matter of absolute Necessity, and the present Time is the only Time that we are sure of, we ought to employ that to so important and needful a purpose. The Time past is gone, and can never be recalled; future Time is not in our power to command, and we are wholly uncertain how much or how little of it may remain. The present is all we can be secure of.

And truly, if we have made no habitual Preparation for Death, by a sincere Repentance and Conversion to God, and Faith in the blessed Redeemer, in order to the securing our Pardon and Peace with him, and thereby providing for a safe and comfortable Death, this ought to be the very first work we apply our Minds to; and every thing else should be postponed to it. We should tremble to think of continuing one day longer in so extremely hazardous a Condition, lest Death should surprize us in it with remediless Ruin. We should give no sleep to our Eyes, nor slumber to our Eyelids, till this great Work be done, lest Death should prevent us while we wretchedly delay it. For who that knows not how soon he must die, would securely continue in that State in which he dare not think of dying!

But supposing we are habitually prepared for Death, 'tis also our necessary Wisdom to be actually prepared, and to improve the present Time for that purpose.

Now our actual Preparation for Death does not require that we should entirely retire from the World, and apply our selves wholly to acts of Devotion; but only that we should be filling up our Station with all the Duties of it, improving our Talents for the Glory of God, laying out our selves in his faithful Service, mortifying our carnal and worldly Affections, cherishing a spiritualiz'd and heavenly Disposition, clearing up our Title to the future Glory, and confirming our Faith and joyful Hope of it. And this ought to be the stated Work of every day. This ought to be our Exercise and Business in the Time of our Health and Strength. And our present Time is all we can promise to our selves for the doing of it. For, alas! when Sickness comes, and Death makes its near Approaches, we are then unfit for this most important Business of Life. We are then incapable of any considerable Service to God; nay, often of any composed Thoughts of him, and Addresses to him. So that 'tis our Wisdom to have then nothing to do but to die, and to resign up our prepared Souls into his gracious Hands.

V. The Consideration of the Uncertainty of the Time of Death should more effectually mortify our inordinate Love of this World.

The Time is short (saith the Apostle Paul) it remaineth that both they that have Wives be as though they had none; And they that weep as though they wept not; And they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not; And they that buy as though they possessed not; And they that use this World as not abusing it, for the fashion of this World passeth away, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

VI. The Consideration of the Uncertainty of Death should represent the other World as near to us, and enable the great things thereof to make the deeper Impression upon us.

We commonly see, that even the most stupid Sinners, do yet entertain awful Thoughts of an Unseen Eternity, when they come to stand upon the very brink of it. O in what affecting Language do they then express their Contempt of this World, and all the perishing Vanities of it! What would they not then give to escape the Torments of Hell, and secure the Glories of Heaven! And yet, perhaps, if restored to their Health, all these Convictions are stifled, and these serious Apprehensions vanish. What's the reason of this! Do they not believe these great Things in Health as well as Sickness? They pretend to do so. And sure the Motives drawn from thence are the same. But on a sick Bed, the Things of this World are apprehended as going, and those of the other are look'd upon as near, as well as sure, and so make the deeper Impression. But if we entertained just and serious Thoughts of the Uncertainty of Life, and our continual hazard of dying, we should never look on the great Things of the other World at so remote a distance; They would appear near to us, so that our Views of them would be more lively, more affecting and powerful. We should then live indeed as those that foresee the speedy Conclusion and Period of all the Concerns and Interests of this dying Life, and the swift Approaches of an awful Eternity. We should live as becomes those that know not how soon that deciding Moment will come that shall fix our unchangeable State for ever. Heaven and Hell would appear as not only great and sure, but near Realities. Too near to admit of any foolish Delays in our fleeing from the Wrath to come, and laying hold on Eternal Life. Too near to forget how soon we must pass the great Gulph of Time, and launch into Eternity; how soon we must appear before God, to our unspeakable Joy or Horror, and go with the Wicked into everlasting Punishment, or with the Righteous into Life Eternal.

S E R M O N VI.

ENOCH's Translation.

Heb. xi. 5.

By Faith Enoch was translated that he should not see Death; and was not found, because GOD had translated him; for before his Translation he had this Testimony, that he pleased GOD.



THE inspired Writer of this Epistle having given us that excellent Description of Divine Faith, which you read in the first Verse of this Chapter, viz. That 'tis the Substance (or, Subsistence) of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen, proceeds to illustrate the Truth of it, by reciting the excellent Fruits this Faith produced in the Lives of holy Patriarchs that lived before and after the Flood, and in those Saints that lived under the Mosaical Dispensation. Among the former, he begins with pious Abel, who offered a more acceptable Sacrifice than his Brother Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was Righteous, God testifying of his Gifts. And by it, He being dead, yet speaketh (or, is yet spoken of, λαλῆται.)

The next memorable Example he produces is that of Enoch in the Text, of whom he tells us, *By Faith Enoch was translated that he should not see Death: And was not found, because God had translated him; for before his Translation he had this Testimony, that he pleased God.*

In this remarkable Passage, concerning Enoch, we may observe,

- I. Enoch's Faith.
- II. The genuine Fruit of it, viz. That he walked so as to please God.
- III. The honourable Testimony that God himself gives of his having done so, by the Pen of an inspired Historian, viz. Moses.
- IV. The liberal Reward of his Faith and Obedience, viz. His being translated that he should not see Death.

Of these Heads, I shall speak briefly in their order, and then make some suitable Practical Reflections upon them.

I. We have here mention made of Enoch's Faith.

For to this, as the Root and Principle, all the eminent Acts of Obedience, by which those Elders obtained so good a Report are ascribed. And so much the inspired Writer intimates in the Verse following the Text, *But without Faith 'tis impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God, must believe, that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of them that diligently seek him, v. 6.* A firm Persuasion concerning the Existence of an invisible God, concerning the glorious Perfections of his Nature, (such as his Omnipresence and Omniscience, his Almighty Power, his Holiness, his Justice, his Goodness and Mercy, his Truth and Faithfulness) concerning his Providential Government over the World, and his Supreme Dominion and Rightful Authority over us his reasonable Creatures, and our Accountableness to him as the Witness and Judge of all

our Actions, and his Rewarding Goodness to them that love and obey him, is the Root and Spring of all acceptable Addresses we make, and Services we pay to him. And Enoch's Faith must have looked beyond all present Administrations of Divine Providence in this lower World, and beyond the Bounds of human Life, (though then of much larger ordinary Extent) even to an Unseen World, and a Life to come; or else it had not answered that noble Description the inspired Writer gives of it, as the Substance of Things hoped for, and the Evidence of Things not seen. And we have just ground to conclude, That besides what the Light of Nature might more imperfectly discover, concerning future Rewards and Punishments in general, Enoch had from Divine Revelation a clear Fore-sight of the great Day of final Judgment, and of the important Eternal Issues of it in the Endless Happiness of the Righteous, and Misery of the Wicked. For we are told by the Apostle Jude, That Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied concerning all such ungodly Sinners (as he had there described) saying, Behold, The Lord comes with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly Deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard Speeches which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him, Epistle of Jude, 14, 15. And there is no doubt, Enoch's Faith imbraced all that was then known to be contained in that first gracious Promise made to our first Parents after their Fall, concerning the Seed of the Woman, that should break the head of the Serpent, Gen. iii. 15. How far the sense of that comprehensive Promise might be more particularly explained to our first Parents, the short History of Moses has left us much in the dark. There is no doubt that Enoch, who lived some Years before the Death of Adam, might learn from him all that he understood concerning the Sense and Extent of that Promise. And 'tis probable that Enoch, who was himself indued with a prophetick Spirit, might receive farther Degrees of Illumination concerning it. We may reasonably suppose, That they understood the Promise concerning a Saviour, that should be the Seed of the Woman, who should repair those Ruins that the Fall of Adam had brought upon Mankind, by redeeming them from the Curse of God's violated Law, restoring that Image of God that Sin had defaced, and raising them to the Hopes of that Eternal Life which they had forfeited by their Defection from God. And 'tis not improbable, that the Prophecy of Enoch, before-mentioned, points to this Saviour as the Lord, that should come with his holy Myriads to execute Judgment on the Ungodly. In short, Enoch's Faith extended to all that God

God had made known of his Mind and Will, either by the remains of the Light of Nature, or by such supernatural Revelation as God in his Wisdom and Mercy thought fit at that Time to vouchsafe to the fallen Race of Adam, in order to their Recovery and Salvation.

II. We have here the genuine Fruit of Enoch's Faith, That he pleased God, or walked to all well-pleasing before him.

These words manifestly refer to what the inspired Historian mentions concerning Enoch, That he walked with God. Which is twice mentioned in the short Account we have concerning him, that we might take more particular Notice of it. His Course of Piety begun early, and he steddily persevered therein through the whole Time of his Abode here on this Earth.

To please God, and approve himself to his All-seeing Eye, was the great Business and Study of his Life. To that End, he walked with God. He kept up a daily Intercourse and Communion with him by all the Exercises of Piety and Devotion, whether more private or publick. For many Judicious Expositors suppose that Religious Societies for publick Worship (as distinguished from Family-Worship) begun in the Days of Enos, the Son of Seth. For 'tis said, Then Men began to call on the Name of the Lord, Gen. vi. 26. i. e. to do it in Joint-Assemblies, wherein several Families did associate for the performance of their publick Homage to him. Other Expositors indeed read the words, Then Men began to call themselves by the Name of the Lord, i. e. the pious Descendants of Seth, as contradicting distinguished from the ungodly Race of wicked Cain, were called The Sons of God, retaining that true Worship of God, which Cain and his impious Race had profanely cast off. See Gen. vi. 1. And it was the Intermarriage of these Sons of God with The Daughters of Men, (i. e. with those of the Progeny of wicked Cain) that brought on that general Corruption of Mankind that exposed them to a general Destruction by the Deluge in Noah's Time. But to return from this Digression, Enoch walked with God, by setting him before his Eyes, as the Witness and Judge of all his Actions; by a dutiful Care to obey his holy Commands; by exercising himself daily to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God and Men; by proposing the blessed God himself, as his great Exemplar and Pattern, and endeavouring to resemble him in all his imitable Perfections, and to be a Follower of him, as One of his dear Children, Eph. v. 1. by studying to be more like to him in Wisdom, in Purity and Holiness, in Equity and Justice, in Truth and Sincerity, in beneficent extensive Goodness and Mercy. His Religious Converses with God had a powerful Influence upon the whole of his Conversation with Men, strongly prompting him to do whatever things were true, whatever things were honest (or, venerable) whatever things were just, whatever things were pure, whatever things were lovely and of good report, whatever things were virtuous and praise-worthy. He was studious to live up to the Dignity of that honourable Character of One of the Sons of God, by being blameless and blameless, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse Generation, and shining as One of the Lights of the World, holding forth the Word of Life, in an exemplary and well-ordered Conversation, Phil. xi. 16, 17.

And there was one Circumstance attending the course of his exemplary Piety that rendered it the more remarkable and commendable, and the more pleasing to God, viz. That he thus walked closely and steddily with God in a Time of very general and growing Defection.

To that purpose we may observe, That we have in this Chapter a Genealogy of those Patriarchs that lived from Adam to Noah in the Line of Seth. Pious Enoch was the seventh in that Line. But though we have an Account of the Age, and the Death of each of them, yet Enoch and Noah are the only Persons

in that Race, of whose Piety there is particular Notice taken by the inspired Historian. Of each of them it is particularly remarked, That they walked with God. (Of Enoch in Gen. v. 22, 24. Of Noah, Gen. vi. 9.)

We cannot indeed certainly conclude from thence, That none in that Race were good Men but Enoch and Noah. We have just reason to think otherwise of the three first at least, viz. Adam, Seth and Enos. But I think there is just ground to apprehend, that some of Enoch's Predecessors, as well as some of his Descendants, were tainted with that common Defection and Corruption, that afterwards rose to so great an height as to involve all Mankind, except Noah and his Family, in that common Destruction by the Flood. This we are sure of, That the Torrent of Profaneness and Wickedness ran very high in Enoch's Time, which he endeavoured to stem, not only by the influence of his Example, but by giving the Sinners of that Age a solemn prophetick Warning of a future Judgment, in which Ungodly Men should be called to a severe Account, not only for their impious Deeds, but for their insolent impious Speeches, wherein they had treated God and Religion with a profane Scorn and Contempt. And this seems plainly to shew, That that general Impiety and Profaneness of the old World was then on the growing hand, which came afterwards to such a monstrous Excess, that we are told, That all Flesh had corrupted its Way, That the Earth was corrupt before God, and filled with Violence; That the Wickedness of Man was great upon the Earth, and that every Imagination of the Thoughts of his Heart was only Evil, and that continually, Gen. vi. 5, 11, 12. And as in the height of this Universal Wickedness, 'tis observed of Noah, That he found Grace in the Eyes of the Lord, being a Just Man, and Perfect (or, Upright) in his Generation, and one that walked with God, Gen. vi. 8, 9. So 'tis observed in Enoch's Time, when that Corruption had made a great Progress and spread in the World, That he also walked with God. And the singularity of his Piety was an high Commendation to it, that he walked with God in a Time of general Defection from him. That in the Course of his Eminent and Exemplary Piety, he swam against the Stream, and vigorously opposed the prevalent Torrent of Impiety and Immorality in the Age wherein he lived. He, both by his Example, and by his faithful Admonitions and Warnings, condemned the wicked Deeds of the Ungodly, and was not moved with their profane Scoffs and Derision. He had no fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprov'd them. He did not follow a Multitude to do Evil; but so conversed with a defiled World, as to keep himself unspotted from the common Pollutions of it. He shone, by his eminent Piety, as a bright Light in a dark and degenerate Age, and persisted in the Course of it, notwithstanding all the Discouragements he met with, in a steddy Opposition to the corrupt Customs and Manners of a World that was over-run with Wickedness.

And this was the noble Effect of his Divine Faith. His steddy Belief of the great Principles of Religion, and particularly those that relate to an invisible World, and the glorious unseen Rewards that are there laid up by the God of Truth, for those that diligently seek and serve him, enabled those Principles to make transforming Impressions on his Heart, and gave them a commanding Influence on his Life and Practice.

III. We have here the honourable Testimony God gave of his having pleased him.

We cannot more effectually please him, than by thus walking with him. The same may be said of Enoch in his Generation, that is said of pious Noah in his, That he found Grace (or Favour) in the Eyes of the Lord. Enoch's unfeigned and steddy Faith, and that Life of holy Obedience that was the genuine Fruit

Fruit of it, was highly acceptable to a gracious God. And it was the more acceptable, not only because of the eminent Degree of it, but because he so constantly persisted in it, in opposition to the prevalent Irreligion of the Age wherein he lived, and thereby bore so honourable a Testimony for God and for true Religion, when Profaneness and Impiety was on the growing hand, and the Contagion thereof was so widely diffused. The Contempt that others so generally cast on God by their Practice, and their hard Speeches concerning him (probably by denying his Providence and Government over the World, and deriding all Expectations of an unseen Reward in the Life to come.) These no way made his Faith in him to waver; and instead of cooling, rather inflamed his Zeal, to manifest his high Veneration for God, by a close walking with him, and exemplary Obedience to his Commands. This is highly pleasing to God. We may observe, 'tis mentioned to the Commendation of righteous Lot, that he maintained his Innocence and Purity in the midst of a defiled Sodom, the abominable Pollutions whereof were such a continual Grief to him, 2 Pet. ii. 8, 9. And it is recorded to the Honour of pious Elijah, that he so stedfastly adhered to, and maintained the Worship of the true God, when the generality of the People had thrown down his Altars, and revolted to the Baalish Idolatry, 1 Kings xix. 10. And we may observe, concerning a pious Remnant among the Jews, who, in a Time of general Profaneness and Corruption, feared the Lord, and spake often to one another, how highly God was pleased with their singular Piety. We are told, The Lord bearkned and heard, and a Book of remembrance was written before him, for them that feared the Lord, and thought on his Name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in the day that I make up my Jewels, &c. Malachy iii. 16, 17. And to add no more, our Saviour records it to the Praise of the Church of Pergamus, That she held fast his Name and Faith, though she dwelt where Satan's Seat was, Rev. xi. 13.

IV. We have the liberal, and in some respects, the singular and extraordinary Reward of Enoch's Faith and Piety, viz. That he was translated that he should not see Death, and was not found, because God had translated him.

The inspired Historian reckoning up the Genealogy of the rest from Adam to Noah, takes particular Notice, not only of the Age they lived to, but of their Dying. But of Enoch 'tis said, He was not, for God took him. And from thence the inspired Writer justly infers, That he did not see Death, but was translated. He was peculiarly exempted from that Curse of Mortality that had passed on the human Race, through the disobedience of the first Adam, by whom Sin entered into the World, and Death by Sin, Rom. v. 12. He was translated in Body as well as Soul, to the Mansions of Light and Glory, without passing through the dark Valley of the shadow of Death.

And 'tis no just Objection against the Truth of this Account, That we read of that Sentence being pass'd in general on fallen Adam and his Race, Dust thou art, and unto Dust thou shalt return. Or that we read of Death's passing on all Men, For that all have sinned, and of its being appointed to all Men once to die, and after that the Judgment, Gen. iii. 19.—Rom. v. 12.—Heb. ix. 27. Because 'tis sufficient to vindicate the Truth of these general Assertions, That this is God's stated Decree and Rule in all his ordinary Dispensations toward the fallen Race of Adam. But it does not imply, That he will never, in his sovereign Providence, make any Exception to this General Rule. 'Tis evident, That the Apostle Paul supposes, concerning those Saints that shall be found alive at the Coming of Christ, That they shall not all sleep, or die, but shall be changed, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52. i. e. undergo such a Change as shall turn their Natural, (or, Animal) into Spiritual Bodies, suited to those heavenly Regions they are to inhabit. And we may reasonably suppose

that the Body of pious Enoch underwent such a remarkable Change as this upon his Translation to the Mansions of Light and Glory. Since a Body so weak, so vile and corruptible as ours, without such a transforming Alteration, would be no way adapted to those Caelestial Mansions. For as the Apostle Paul tells us, *Flesh and Blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, neither doth Corruption inherit Incorruption*, 1 Cor. xv. 50. Since then so many will at the End of the World be exempted from the common Lot of Natural Death without any contradiction to this Decree concerning Mankind in general, it can be no way inconsistent with it, for Divine Providence to vouchsafe to one or two extraordinary Persons, and for important Reasons, a peculiar Privilege and Immunity from the common Doom pass'd on the rest of Mankind. And the only Instances of such an extraordinary Dispensation that we know of since the beginning of the World to this day, are those Two, the one of Enoch, before the giving of the Law, the other of Elijah, under the Mosaic Dispensation.

As to the Translation of the Soul of pious Enoch to a State of heavenly Felicity, it was a Reward common to him, with all that have, as he, walked with God, even to all that die in the Lord. What was peculiar and singular, and truly extraordinary, was his Exemption from Natural Death, and the immediate Translation of his Body as well as Soul into the heavenly Regions, though no doubt with the same refining Change that the Bodies of those Saints shall undergo who are found alive at the second Coming of Christ.

But here you may be ready to enquire into the Reasons of so extraordinary a Dispensation, Why was Enoch's Faith and Piety crowned with so distinguishing and so uncommon a Reward?

Ans. Were there no Reasons thereof obvious to our View, as that would be no just Objection against the Truth of the Matter of Fact; so it would every way become us to adore those Methods of Divine Providence which we are ignorant of the particular Grounds of. But yet if we narrowly consider the particular Time and Circumstances of this extraordinary Dispensation, with respect to Enoch (as well as that with respect to Elijah) we may, I humbly conceive, discern such Reasons of it, as are sufficient to vindicate the Wisdom as well as Goodness of God therein. I shall but briefly hint at such as these.

I. This extraordinary Dispensation seems designed to give the World an early Document and Pledge of that entire glorious Immortality, that shall be the final Reward of all that walk with God. It seems highly probable, That Infidelity, Profaneness, Sensuality, and disregard of Justice, were the reigning Sins of the antediluvian World; and the great ordinary length of human Life seems to have been their great Temptation thereto.

We are told by the inspired Writer, That he who comes to God, must believe, That he is, and is the Rewarder of all that diligently seek him. It was therefore every way congruous to the Wisdom of God to give Mankind such an early Specimen and Proof of the Certainty and Greatness of that future Reward. Enoch was one that firmly believed that future Reward, and was prompted by the Faith of it to walk with God; and God to give the World a sensible Conviction and Demonstration how acceptable his eminent Piety was, does by a singular Dispensation exempt him from the common Lot of Natural Death, and translates him both in Body and Soul to the Possession of Eternal Life. So that, as the Inhabitants of the World before the Flood saw in the Natural Death of Adam the penal Consequent and Fruit of Sin, so they might see in this Translation of Enoch, what should be the final gracious Reward of Faith and Holiness. And hereby they had a plain Evidence given them, That this final Reward should extend to their Bodies as well as Souls; That their entire Nature should in due time be

rescued from the Power of Death, and inherit glorious and blessed Immortality. And it was congruous to the Wisdom and Goodness of God by this extraordinary Dispensation towards Enoch, to furnish his Church with such an early Proof of this most important Truth, that he might establish the Belief of it, and thereby set before us the most powerful Motive and Incitement to a Life of holy Obedience. And therefore Tertullian does very significantly call pious Enoch, a Candidate of Eternity; and others more significantly, a Pledge and Witness of Eternal Life.

2. God seems by this extraordinary Dispensation to have designed the giving Mankind this needful Instruction, That as there was a blessed Immortality reserved as the Reward of preserving Faith and Piety; so it was not to be enjoyed here on this Earth, but in the highest Heavens. That great Extent of Age to which Adam and his immediate Descendants then lived, was a strong Temptation to them to choose their Portion in this Life, and seek and pursue a sensual Happiness in the agreeable and pleasing Enjoyments of it, without looking beyond it to a Life to come. And what Antidote could be more proper against this violent Temptation, than some clear and convincing Evidence, That this Earth was not the Place where good Men were to expect their final Reward; and that their Happiness was not to be sought in the Enjoyments of this Life, but in those of a better. And what stronger Proof could be given of this, than pious Enoch's early Translation to Heaven after such a comparatively short Course of eminent Piety on this Earth? The most of his Ancestors in this Line had lived to above Eight or Nine Hundred Years. Whereas, Enoch lived on Earth only Three Hundred and Sixty Five. So that he was comparatively in the Vigour and Flower of his Age (as one of Thirty Years may be now supposed to be according to the present ordinary date of Life.) He might therefore have had as rational a Prospect of a long Enjoyment of Temporal Prosperity as those that were his Progenitors. If then the great God, even when he designed to crown his singular Piety by a remarkable and distinguishing Reward, instead of prolonging his Life on Earth, translated him to Heaven; if, instead of protracting his Abode in this World, he removed him to a better, this Dispensation carried with it the clearest Demonstration, That good Men are but Pilgrims and Strangers on this Earth; That this is only a Place of their Trial and Probation, and not of their final Reward; That the heavenly Regions are their true Seat of Bliss, their everlasting Home and Rest; That a gracious God will recompence those that uprightly walk with him, not by continuing them here, but by taking them to himself; That their Hopes are not confined to this Life, but extend their comfortable Prospect to a better. And sure, such a lively Instruction as this was highly needful and seasonable in so irreligious and licentious an Age as that of Enoch's was, in which the long ordinary Duration of human Life, and the Affluence of all sensitive Enjoyments, carried so strong a Temptation, either to disbelieve, or to slight and neglect the Interest of a Life to come. Since therefore Enoch's Translation was not in a Way of Judgment, but of eminent Mercy and Favour, since it was intended as a distinguishing Reward of his exemplary Piety, Men might reasonably infer from it, That God had provided for his faithful Servants a more satisfying and durable Happiness than can be enjoyed in this World; and that an early Translation of a prepared Soul to the World above, was a most desirable Blessing. And that those who walk'd with God, were to expect their consummate Felicity in his immediate Presence above. And to give a clear Attestation to such momentous Truths as these, was a very valuable End of God's extraordinary Dispensation towards this eminently good Man.

3. It might probably be one Design of God's unusual Dispensation, to convince the World, that where the Instances of Mens Piety have been extraordinary, the degree of their Reward shall be so.

We have but two Instances of this extraordinary Dispensation recorded in the Holy Scriptures; the one that of Enoch, who was so bright a Pattern of eminent Faith and Piety, when both seem to have been under a general and growing Declension. And this Instance was in the early Patriarchal Age, the other was under the Mosaic Law, viz. that of the Prophet Elijah, who manifested so extraordinary a Zeal for the cause of God, in opposition to the general Defection of the Israelites to the Worship of Baal. Of him we read, that when he and Elifha went on, and talked, behold, there appeared a Chariot of Fire, and Horses of Fire, and parted them asunder; and Elijah was carried up by a Whirlwind into Heaven, 2 Kings ii. 11. But since the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has fully brought Life and Immortality to Light, we have no Instance of any such extraordinary Dispensation, nor indeed any such Occasion or Need of it. But we see by these two forementioned Instances of it, that God chose to put this mark of distinguishing Favour and Honour upon two, that had in their different Ages given such distinguishing Proofs of their singular Piety in opposition to the great and general Corruption of the Times wherein they lived. Hereby we see the Truth of what God elsewhere asserts, verified, those that honour me, I will honour, Sam. i. 11. 30.

To these Reasons I would subjoin some Observations that carry at least some probability with them.

Some have observed, that as this inspired Writer among the Examples of Divine Faith mentions Abel and Enoch; so as righteous Abel was in his violent Death a Type of the Sufferings and Death of our blessed Saviour (that eminently just One whom the Jews by wicked Hands crucified and slew) so Enoch's Translation seems designed as a Type of our Lord's Ascension to Heaven, and Entrance on a State of glorious Immortality there. And as in Abel's Death we may see a Specimen of those Sufferings to which good Men are often exposed in this Life for righteousness sake; so in this Instance of Enoch we see a Specimen of the glorious Reward of entire Immortality reserved for them in the Life to come.

Others have observed, that as Adam probably was the first Man that died a natural Death (for Abel's was a violent one) so Enoch's Translation quickly succeeded the Death of Adam, to intimate to us, that as the antediluvian Inhabitants of the World might see in Adam's Death, what was the penal Fruit of Sin; so they might see in Enoch's Translation, what should be the final Reward of Faith and Holiness. And to add no more, some have observed, that as Enoch was the seventh from Adam, so Adam and five more were subjected to natural Death, but Enoch the seventh was translated without seeing Death. By which they suppose, that Divine Providence designed to point out to us the Time in general, when the blessed Resurrection might be expected, viz. that as Death should reign over the Race of Adam for Six Thousand Years, so at the Expiration thereof, the general Resurrection should restore all the spiritual Seed of the second Adam, to a State of glorious Immortality, by an entire Abolition of that Sentence of Death that had upon Adam's Transgression passed upon all. But these Conjectures I shall content my self with the bare mention of.

It now remains, that we make some practical Reflexions on this Subject by way of Application. And,

I. We may hence learn the Necessity of a firm Belief, of the great Principles of Religion, in order to the acceptable Practice of it.

We are told by the inspired Writer, that *without Faith, 'tis impossible to please God*. We must therefore make it our first care to attain a full Persuasion of Mind; That there is a God, a self-existent and necessary Being, who made this World by his Power, and directs the Affairs of it by his sovereign Providence, and governs his reasonable Creatures by his Laws, and will call them to an account for their Actions, and judge them according to their Works. That there is a God, who is every where present with us, who searches our Hearts and tries our Reins, and observes all our Ways; That we, as his Creatures and daily Beneficiaries, are obliged to credit what he reveals of his Mind and Will to us, to obey his Commands, to trust his Promises, and to seek our Happiness in his Favour as the only source of it. That though *the whole World is become guilty before God*, yet he is a *God in Christ, reconciling the guilty World to himself*, making a free Offer of Indemnity and Pardon of Grace and Eternal Glory to all that by Faith in a Mediator, penitently return to him; That upon our unfeigned Conversion to God, he will for Christ's sake restore us to his Favour, adopt us into his Family, send his holy Spirit to abide with us; and upon our sincere and persevering Obedience, will receive our departing Spirits into the Mansions of Light and Bliss, and in his appointed Time raise our Bodies themselves, and crown our entire Nature with a glorious and blessed Immortality. That all, finally, unbelieving and impenitent Sinners shall be doomed to a remediless Separation from him, and go away into everlasting Punishment. Such necessary and important Principles of Religion should be deeply rooted in our Minds. Our Faith must render these most important Matters present to our Thoughts, and represent them to our Minds in the Light of Divine Revelation, as *certain*, and of *infinite Importance and Moment*. It must give a kind of present Subsistence to those future Rewards which we now hope for, and realize that unseen State of future Glory and Happiness to us, which our outward Senses can give us no discovery of, by enabling us to rely on the immutable Promise of the God of Truth concerning it. And, O that there were more of such a Living Faith to be found, even among those that enjoy the clearest Light of Divine Revelation! But, alas! how do the sensual and ungodly Lives of the generality carry a sad but convincing Demonstration, That secret practical Infidelity reigns in their Hearts! And what need have those of us, who do yield an unfeigned Assent to these important Truths, to get our Faith more confirmed and strengthened! What need have we to pray (as the poor Man mentioned in the Gospel) *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief*, Mark ix. 24.

II. Let us hence learn to improve our Faith, in order to our *so walking with God*, as to please him.

It was by the Exercise of Divine Faith that *Enoch walked with God*, and obtained this honourable Testimony that he pleased him. 'Tis this genuine and excellent Fruit of it that must distinguish a true and living Faith, from a counterfeit and dead Image of it. Let it appear then, that we indeed believe, that there is such a God as Revealed Religion represents to us, by our earnest Desires and Sollicitude to secure an Interest in his Favour, by an unfeigned Conversion to him, and humble Application to his Mercy, through that Mediator he has appointed and provided for us, and through whom alone he is accessible to us; by our high Veneration for so infinitely great and glorious a Being; by our superlative Love of him; by our filial Care to please, and dread to offend him; by our maintaining a daily Intercourse and Communion with him in the Duties of his private and publick Worship; by our acting daily as under his Inspection and View, and with a solicitous Concern to approve our selves to his All-seeing Eye; by our studying his Revealed Will, and setting his Word before us, as a

Lamp unto our Feet, and a Light unto our Paths, by contemplating his imitable Perfections, and endeavouring to become more like to him; by aspiring to that endless Glory and consummate Felicity, which his precious Promises assures us shall be the certain Reward of all that diligently seek and serve him; by preferring that unseen Happiness before every Thing here below that may stand in competition with it, and through the steady Belief of it, obtaining an happy Victory over this World, and all the Allurements or Terrors of it; and in a word, by a course of sincere and persevering Holiness. 'Tis such noble Effects and genuine Fruits that must shew, that ours is indeed the *precious Faith of the elect of God*; and that the great Truths of Religion are not meer empty Notions that swim in our Heads, but practical Principles, which our Hearts are delivered into the Mould of, and which have a governing Influence on the whole of our Conversation, both towards God and towards Men. 'Tis a Faith thus *working by Love* to God and Men, thus productive of all good Works, and of all the Fruits of sincere Obedience, that must commend us to the favourable regard and gracious Acceptance of that God, *who loveth Righteousness*, and *beholds the Upright with a pleased Countenance*, Psa. xi. 7.

III. We may learn from the Example of *Enoch*, That the prevalency of Infidelity or Irreligion in the Age wherein we live, should not abate our Faith and Piety, but rather increase it.

Enoch walked with God in a Time of great and general Defection from him. His Belief of the great Principles of Religion was not shaken by the profane Scorn and Derision, they seem then generally to have been treated with. The insolent contemptuous Speeches which the ungodly Sinners of that Generation uttered against God, against his Providence and Government, and the Rewards of a Life to come, were so far from making his Faith to waver, that he openly rebuked them, and warned those proud Scoffers of the dreadful Account they would be called to for them. Their *ungodly Deeds*, in which they abounded, could not draw him to any Compliance with them, or Imitation of them. On the contrary, he foretold them of the righteous Judgment which the Lord would execute upon them. And herein we should propose him as an excellent Pattern for us to follow. We live in an Age in which Infidelity has made a dangerous Progress, and the Principles of Revealed Religion have been run down and ridiculed. O let us not suffer our selves to be either cavilled or laughed out of our Belief of those Divine Truths that are the only solid Foundation of our Eternal Hopes. Let not us throw away the living Oracles of God, those Words of Eternal Life, to take the dim uncertain Oracles of human Reason for our only Guide. Let us hold fast the Profession of our Christian Faith without wavering; and steddily maintain our Divine Faith, as the only Principle by which we may *so live*, as to please God, and find acceptance with him, and *so die*, as to have comfortable and well-grounded Expectations of being for ever happy in his blissful Presence. And the more we see living in a continual Forgetfulness and Neglect of God, in a wilful Estrangement from all serious Communion with him, in a secure Contempt of his Authority and Commands, and in a stupid Neglect of his offered Salvation; let us walk more closely with him, be more studious to obey and serve, to glorify and please him; to embrace his exceeding great and precious Promises, and to improve them as powerful Motives to abound in all the Fruits of practical Religion and Piety. To be thus singular in true substantial Piety will be no matter of Reproach, unless with those that are ignorant of the real Excellency of it. On the contrary, it will be our highest Honour in a sinful and declining Age, to be enrolled in the Annals of Heaven among the Number of those that have *walked with God*.

IV. We

IV. We may from this Example of *Enoch's*, draw strong Incouragements and Motives to imitate his singular Faith and Piety.

1. We see in his Example, that to walk thus stedily with God, even in a Time of general Corruption and Defection, is no impracticable Duty. *Enoch* had as strong Temptations to resist from the alluring Vanities of the World as we can be exposed to; nay, much stronger, if we consider to how great a length the Life of Man on Earth was then ordinarily extended. He met with as great Discouragements in the course of his sincere Piety as any of us can do; having the strong Current of Irreligion and Wickedness in that Age to bear up against, and their profane Reproaches and Scoffs at his singularity therein to encounter. And yet he persisted in it with an unshaken Resolution, and still continued to walk with God.

2. We see here how acceptable our sincere Faith and Piety will be to God.

God himself vouchsafes to give this honourable Testimony of *Enoch*, That he pleased him. His distinguishing Faith and Obedience attracted the Eye and Heart of God. And how powerful a Motive should it be to our thus believing in God, and walking with him, that it will commend us to his Favour and gracious Approbation? And that is of infinitely greater Consequence to us than any human Applauses can be, and every way sufficient to weigh down all the unjust Reproaches and Censures of a loose and irreligious Age. Heathens themselves have performed many laudable Actions with an Eye to their gaining publick Applause, and perpetuating their Fame among Men. And shall not we be acted by a more regular and truly noble Ambition, to obtain the Praise that is of God? Shall not we reckon it our highest Honour to be accepted of him, to be accounted the Friends of God, and Favorites of Heaven? And such we shall be deem'd, if we, like *Enoch*, walk with God, when the generality of Men forget him, and turn their back upon him.

3. We see here in the Example of *Enoch*, how liberally a gracious God will reward our sincere Faith and Piety.

Our Reward will be the same in substance with his, though there be some difference in the Time and Manner of bestowing it. We are not indeed to expect any such immediate Translation of our Bodies to the heavenly Regions as he was privileged with.

We have no ground to hope for any such Exemption from the common Lot of Mortality. We must expect to pass through the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death, as all Mankind (these two Instances excepted) have done before us. But we may expect that our departing Spirits shall be translated into those Mansions of Rest, where our Lord Jesus Christ is gone to prepare a Place for us. We may expect when absent from the Body, to be present with our blessed Lord, to behold his Glory, and to be transform'd into his Likeness. And we may commit our Bodies themselves to the Grave, as a safe Dormitory, where they shall sleep till the last Trumpet awakes them. And then we look for that Saviour from Heaven, who will entirely abolish Death, by raising our Bodies, and fashioning them like to his own glorious Body, by that mighty Power whereby he is able to subdue all things to himself, Phil. iii. 20, 21. Then shall this Mortal put on Immortality, and this Corruptible, Incorruption; and Death shall be perfectly swallowed up of glorious Eternal Life, 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54. Of this we have an assuring Pledge in the Resurrection and Ascension of our Blessed Saviour, who is become the first Fruits of them that sleep, and has consecrated the whole Lump (even all his spiritual Seed) to a blessed Immortality. And though we must die, though we must put off this earthly Tabernacle, and be unclothed of this Garment of Flesh, we should no more regret that, than ascending *Elijah* did to drop his Mantle on the Earth; when he took his Flight into the Regions above, 1 Kings xi. 13, 14.

And I may add, That the more closely we have walked with God, and the more eminent and exemplary the Exercises of our Faith and Obedience have been in opposition to the strongest Temptations, we may expect that the degree of our future Reward will be suited thereto. Our future Advancement will bear some proportion to our Fidelity and Diligence in the improvement of our present Talents. Not only shall all that have sown to the Spirit, reap Eternal Life, but those that have sown bountifully shall reap so. And who would not with a commendable Ambition aspire to higher degrees of future Glory? Since most probably one Star differs from another in glory in that heavenly Orb, we should not only desire to shine as Stars in the Firmament above, but as Stars of some considerable Magnitude there. 'Tis no sinful, but a laudable Emulation to aspire to be this way Great in the Kingdom of Heaven.

S E R M O N VII.

On the Certainty of a Future Judgment.

xvii Acts 30, 31.

30 And the Times of this Ignorance G O D winked at, but now commandeth all Men every where to repent.

31 Because he appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Assurance to all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.



HERE are some Truths in our Holy Religion that are justly called the first Principles of the Oracles of God, and the Foundation on which the whole Superstructure is raised. (See Heb. v. 12.--Heb. vi. 1.) And among those Fundamental Truths, the inspired Writer to the Hebrews has taught us to rank those two that are mentioned in my Text, viz. the Necessity of Repentance from dead Works, and the Certainty of Eternal Judgment. And how necessary a Connexion there is between them, my Text plainly intimates, by supposing the firm Belief of an Eternal Judgment to be the most powerful Persuasive to a sincere Repentance. What Truth can more effectually startle and alarm the Consciences of the securest Sinners, and stop them in their mad career of Folly and Wickedness; what Argument can more strongly excite them to fear God and keep his Commandments, than this, That he will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be good or evil? Eccles. 2. 'Tis therefore of great Necessity and Use in Practical Religion to fix in our Minds a rooted Persuasion of this great and important Article, that our Consciences may be under the continual awe, and may on all occasions feel the commanding force of it. For well may God command all Men every where to repent, when he has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, &c. and has given us such satisfying assurance of it.

I need go no farther back to clear the coherence of these words, than to take notice, That the Apostle Paul, in the Verses foregoing, strikes at the Root of Pagan Idolatry, by shewing them, that the Presence of that God who made the World and all Things therein, and who is Lord of Heaven and Earth, could not be confined to a material Temple, ver. 24. That he who needed nothing, but gave to all Breath and Life and all things, was not to be worshipped with Mens hands, as if those Temples or Images that are the Productions of human Art could any way contribute to his Glory and Service, ver. 25. That he who has made all Nations of one Blood, to dwell on all the face of the Earth, and has before appointed the Times and Bounds of their Habitation; That he who is not far from us, but in whom we live and move, and have our Being, needs no material Temple or Image to bring him nearer to us, and to give us assurance of his Presence with

us. Nay, that that invisible Deity, whose Off-spring our Souls (that invisible part of us) are, must not be thought like unto Gold or Silver, or Stone graven by Art and Man's Device. Those insensible material Images and Statues being no way capable to give us any suitable Representation of an omnipresent and infinite Mind, but rather tending to suggest to us the most dishonourable Thoughts of him.

Now these Times of Gentile Ignorance (saith the Apostle (God winked at, or overlooked, i. e. as he elsewhere explains his own meaning, God had (in his just Judgment) suffered the Heathen Nations for so many Ages to walk in their own (Idolatrous) ways, without sending any extraordinary Prophets to instruct or reclaim them, without furnishing them with any other Notices of himself, or any other means to seek and find him, than what the Light of Nature and the Works of common Providence had afforded, which yet (as he tells us elsewhere) rendered them inexcusable in their not glorifying God according to what they knew of him. See Rom. i. 20, 21. But now (saith he) he calls all Men every where to repent, and that because he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, &c. i. e. he now by sending his Apostles to preach the Gospel to all Nations, calls all Men where-ever the sound thereof reaches, to turn from their Idols and Vanities, and from all their Sins to the Living God, by superadding to what the Light of Nature discovered concerning a future Judgment, a clearer and fuller Discovery of the particular Circumstances, and more abundant and convincing Evidence of the Certainty of it.

In the words then these Heads offer themselves to our present Meditation.

I. God will judge the World in Righteousness.

II. There is a Day, or particular Time appointed for that publick and final Judgment.

III. God will judge the World by Jesus Christ, as his Commissioner.

IV. He has given us Assurance of this great Truth, in his raising him from the Dead.

V. These great Truths contain the most powerful Motives to a sincere Repentance.

Of each of these Heads I shall speak in their order.

I begin with the

I. Viz. That God will judge the World in Righteousness.

In

In speaking to this Branch of the Text, I shall, for the Illustration and Proof of it, insist on the following Heads.

First, I shall shew, That the Original Right of Judging the World belongs unto God alone.

Secondly, I shall shew, That all those Perfections are to be found in him alone, that both capacitate him for the Exercise of that Right, and assure us of the Equity and Righteousness of his Sentence.

Thirdly, I shall consider what Evidence the Light of Nature does furnish us with of the certainty of such a future Judgment.

And then I shall make some Practical Reflexions upon the whole.

First, I shall shew, That the Original Right of Judging the World belongs unto God alone.

To judge reasonable Creatures, *i. e.* to call them to an Account for their Actions, in order to final Rewards or Punishments, is an Act of sovereign Authority that supposes them to be his rightful Subjects, who is their supreme Judge. Now, who can claim such a *supreme Authority* over the World (both of *Angels and Men*) but he that *made it*? Who has such an absolute Right to give Laws for regulating all our moral Actions, and to pass Sentence upon us for our Observance or Violation of them, but he that gave us our Beings, and endued us with such reasonable and self-determining Powers, as render us capable Subjects of moral Government? Well therefore might *Abraham* describe him by this Character of the Judge of the whole Earth, Gen. xviii. 25. Nay, so justly does he claim this Power of *Judging the World*, as his *Original Right*, that all Legislative and Judicial Authority among Men is derived from him. There is no *Power* (or *Rightful Authority*) but *what is of God*. *All such Powers are of his Ordination*, Rom. xiii. 1. (He having by the Light of Nature sufficiently signified his Will, both concerning the Office of Civil Magistracy in general, and the great Ends it should be subservient to, *viz.* the Terror of all Evil-Doers, and the Praise and Defence of them that do well. See ver. 3.) By him *Kings rule and Princes decree Justice*. They are in the Protection and Reward of the *Virtuous* and *Just*; the *Ministers of God*, to their Subjects, for good; and in the Punishment of the *Flagitious* and *Wicked*, they are the *Ministers of his vindictive Justice*, that execute his *Wrath* against such *Evil-Doers*. See ver. 3, 4. Their Judicial Power is therefore entirely derivative and borrowed, and is an Image and Emblem of his Authority, who is the supreme *Lawgiver and Judge* that is able to *save and destroy*, James iv. 12. And on that very account, the daily Exercise of their Judicial Power should remind us of his final Judgment. As to *earthly Magistrates* indeed, their Authority is not only bounded by him that gave it, but may in the first Constitution of Civil Government admit of many *Limitations* from those that voluntarily subject themselves to it, and can only be regularly set up over *willing consenting Nations*. But God's judicial Authority is *absolute and unlimited*, founded on his Act of Creation, and therefore of *universal Extent*, and *antecedent* to any Choice or Consent on our part.

Secondly, All those Perfections are to be found in God alone, that capacitate him for the Exercise of this Right (of *Judging the World*) and that may assure us of the *Equity and Righteousness* of his Judgment.

As to all *Human Judgment*, there are so manifold Imperfections attending it, arising partly from the common, though sinless Infirmities and Imperfections of our *finite Nature*, and chiefly from those corrupt Propensions of our *lapsed Nature* (which earthly Princes are no more exempted from than the rest of Mankind) that God alone can *perfectly* judge his reasonable Creatures: 'Tis in his Sentence alone that Mankind can fully acquiesce, and are therefore *ultimately* to be judged by him.

And this will clearly appear if we consider what Excellencies are required in order to pass such a perfect and finally decisive Sentence on all Mankind. As,

1. 'Tis requisite, that he who should *perfectly* and *ultimately* judge the World, should perfectly know the Persons and Things that are to be judged.

'Tis for want of this Perfection that there is such a Flaw and Defect, such an Uncertainty and Doubtfulness in the Administrations of Human Justice, even when 'tis in the Hands of the most upright and uncorrupted Judges among Men.

Their Knowledge is at best so limited and defective, that it can reach no farther than to those *Overt-Acts*, the *Words* or *External Works* of Men. And even as to those, since earthly Judges themselves are not supposed to be the Eye and Ear-witnesses of the Matters to be judged; they must proceed either upon the Testimony of Witnesses, (who are at best fallible, and who are often bribed and suborned) or upon the strong Presumptions of circumstantial Evidence, (that is at best but dubious and liable to Misconstruction and Mistake.) And where there is so much Uncertainty in the Evidence, from the Fallibility or possible Falseness of those that give it, or from the Obscurity of it, there can be no other than a fallible Judgment given: Nay, in some very intricate Cases, the *Matter of Right* may be as dubious as the *Matter of Fact*, and capable to puzzle and nonplus the Judgment of the wisest of Men.

But then for the far greatest part of the Actions of Men, they do not so much as fall under the Observation and Cognizance, and therefore not under the Judgment of Human Courts of Judicature, I mean, our *Thoughts* and *Inclinations*, our *Intentions* and *Purposes*. And yet these are not only the far greatest and most considerable part of our Actions, but such as contain in them the most of *moral Good or Evil*: Nay, 'tis from our inward *Thoughts* and *Intentions*, our inward *Aims* and *Designs*, the inward *Motives* and *Principles* we act from, that our *Words* and external *Works* chiefly derive their *Goodness* or *Malignity*. 'Tis these unseen Springs they flow from that chiefly render them rewardable or punishable. Many faulty *Words* and *Works* may be greatly extenuated or aggravated by the *Ignorance* or *Knowledge*, by the *Surprise* or *Deliberation*, by the good or ill *Intentions* of those by whom they are uttered and done. And no earthly Judges can so far penetrate into this Cabinet of Mens Hearts, as to discern in what Measure and Degree they are culpable. And 'tis very obvious to our Thoughts, how short and limited, how dubious and uncertain their Judgment must be, even from this unavoidable Imperfection of their Knowledge. 'Tis but little they know of us, and that in a very defective manner.

He then alone is capable to pass a perfect and decisive Judgment upon all Mankind, whose Knowledge is universal and unerring, boundless and infinite. To him every particular Person that appears at his Tribunal is perfectly known. To his all-comprehending View every Man's Works and Ways are obvious and naked: Nay, his piercing Eye penetrates into the secret Recesses of every Man's Heart; all the Thoughts and Purposes, all the Projects and Designs, all the Motives and Principles of acting, that are formed and found there, being as open to the Inspection of his infinite Mind as our most publick Words and Works. No obscurity of Place can hide or cover any of our Actions from his All-seeing Eye, to whom the *Night shines as the Day*, and the *Light and Darkness are all alike*, Psal. cxxxix. 11, 12. No Recess or Solitude can exclude us from the Notice and Observation of this All-seeing Witness, who *compasses our Path* and *our Bed*, who *besets us before and behind*, and from whose (unlimited) Presence we can no where flee. No Distance of Time can efface

any of our past Actions out of the *Book of his Remembrance*. They are all penn'd down in the Records of his Omniscience; all our most *secret Sins* are there set in the *Light of his Countenance*, and will appear again to our Confusion and Condemnation, if pardoning Mercy does not now pass an Act of Oblivion and Indemnity upon them: Nay, whereas in *earthly Courts*, nothing does so effectually justify their Sentence as the Confession of the guilty Actors themselves, and therefore in many dubious Cases, where the presumptive Evidence has been strong but not certain, it has been the practice of some Nations to extort such a Confession by Torture: Herein the Perfection of God's Judgment appears, not only that *his own Testimony* is in this Case *unerring and infallible*, but that he has that sovereign Power over the *Consciences of Men*, that he can awaken their self-reflexive Faculty, and oblige every guilty Sinner to a voluntary Confession of all that is laid to his charge; he can command every wicked Man's Conscience to turn his own Accuser, and to give in Evidence against himself. And there can be no farther dispute about the Truth of the Evidence, where two such unquestionable Witnesses give it in, as the All-knowing God and every Man's own Conscience. So that this glorious Perfection of Omniscience gives us the highest Security that the great Judge of the whole Earth can neither *mistake in Matter of Fact* nor in *Matter of Right*. He alone therefore is capable of passing an unerring and finally decisive Doom upon all Mankind.

2. 'Tis requisite, That he who should perfectly and ultimately judge the World, should not only perfectly *know the Persons and Things* to be judged, but be by the Perfections of his own Nature set above the reach of any possible *Temptation*, to pass a wrong Judgment upon them.

In earthly Courts of Judicature, Justice is often perverted, not so much through the *Ignorance* as through the *Corruption* of those that should administer it. Sometimes a partial Affection to the Person that is judged, tempts them to overlook and extenuate his Guilt, and makes them turn the Ballance towards the side they favour most; so that they regard more, *whose Cause* it is, than *what the real Merits* of it are. Sometimes Prejudice or Passion mislead them, so that imaginary Crimes pass for real Guilt, and any lame Evidence for sufficient Proof against those whom they hate, and are glad of any plausible Occasion of wrecking their Malice on. And in that Case, Laws are wire-drawn and stretched to the utmost of unreasonable Rigour and Severity. At other times, *Bribes* blind the Eyes of earthly Judges; so that their own private Interest is the main Rule by which they measure the Right of others, and the Cause goes on that side on which the Considerations of Advantage and Gain turn the Scale. Sometimes a servile Fear of those that are powerful and great, strikes an awe into earthly Judges, and makes them wield the Sword of Justice with a *trembling and wavering Hand*, afraid to strike such potent Offenders, as may have it in their power to resent and revenge the impartial Execution of publick Justice. And thus the Faults of great Men, through a sinful and cowardly Connivance, often escape unpunished.

But there is nothing of this kind that can pervert the Judgment of the great and blessed God. The essential and inflexible Righteousness of his Nature assures us that no partial Affection and Favour can ever bias his Judgment; and that *there is no [προσωποληψία] respect of Persons with him*, 2 Rom. xi. And his infinite Benignity and Clemency, who is *good to all*, and *whose tender Mercies are over all the Works of his hands*, give us the highest security, That he has no Enmity against his reasonable Creatures, but what their own real Demerits have raised; and that in judging them, his Justice will be so tempered with Goodness, as to make all the favourable Allowances that are

consistent with the Honour of his impartial Equity. And for that Passion that often misguides the Judgment of Men, it can have no place with him, whose perfect Mind is always in an undisturbed Serenity and Calm, and the Exercise of whose Justice is always under the Conduct of infinite Wisdom and Counsel. And for the *Temptation of Interest*, he is infinitely above it, who is absolutely All-sufficient, who stands in no need of his Creatures, who can receive no real Benefit from their Acquittal and Happiness, nor Damage from their Condemnation and Misery. He has therefore no sinister Motives to sway him. He is not capable of being so much as tempted to any Act of Injustice or Evil. And for that wretched Weakness, *The servile Fear of Human Greatness*, we can suspect no such thing in him, who is *the great and only Potentate, The King of Kings, and Lord of Lords*, to whose Authority the greatest of earthly Princes are as entirely subject as the meanest of their Vassals, and to whose vindictive Power and Justice they are equally obnoxious. And 'tis upon this Consideration, that earthly Magistrates are charged, *Not to fear the Faces of Men*, because *the Judgment is God's* who is infinitely above the greatest of Men, and before whom the *meanest Peasant* shall have as favourable an Hearing as the *proudest Monarch*, 1 Deut. xviii.

We see then that these adorable Perfections of inflexible Justice, and boundless Goodness, of dispassionate Wisdom, of entire All-sufficiency and infinite Self-happiness, of absolute Independency and Sovereignty, joined with Omniscience, give us the highest Assurance of the Equity of God's final Sentence. And to be convinced of that is a matter of great importance, and 'tis highly requisite that we should entertain such Thoughts of him that is to be our ultimate Judge, and from whose Sentence there lies no Appeal. There is nothing that Men have usually a more quick and pungent Sense of, than the Injustice of Human Courts of Judicature, where oppressed Innocence expects to find Relief. Solomon does justly reckon it among the great Evils he had seen *under the Sun*, *That he beheld the Place of Judgment, and Wickedness was there; and the Place of Righteousness, that Iniquity was there*, Eccles. iii. 16. And sure nothing can be more grievous to Human Nature than to be oppressed and wronged under a false Shew of Justice, and to be destroyed and ruined under the abused *Forms of Law*. And the Preacher could find no Ease and Relief under this melancholy Reflexion, without looking forward to an *higher and ultimate Judgment*, which this Calamity naturally led him to the Consideration of, *I said in mine heart, God shall judge the Righteous and the Wicked, for there is a Time there for every Purpose and every Work*, v. 17. q. d. "And since Justice is often entirely banished from among Men, it will surely have Place with God: Since often the Oppressed are not to expect it here, there is a *higher Tribunal*, there is a *future Time* when they may look for the Redress of so otherwise intolerable a Grievance." And, O what an unspeakable Excellency does it argue in the *Judgment of God*, that 'tis liable to no Suspicion of Partiality or Iniquity! That those whom it condemns will have nothing to object against it, but will be obliged to own the Equity of it, and go away under Eternal Conviction, that his Sentence upon them is most righteous and just! 'Tis every way fit that no reasonable Plea or Exception should lie against a Judgment that is *final and absolute, decisive and irrevocable*.

Once more,

3. 'Tis requisite, That he who shall perfectly and ultimately judge the World be endued with Power to execute the Sentence he shall pass upon them.

And such *Unlimited Power* belongs only unto God. The Power of earthly Judges, is but narrow and limited. The Number and Interest of Offenders does often set them above the reach of Laws, and secures their

their present Impunity in their Crimes. The Power of Princes may be too weak to call great Offenders to an Account, and may oblige them to connive at those Enormities they dare not venture to punish. Nay, Offenders may easily by Flight, or by voluntary Death escape out of the Hands of Publick Justice, when their atrocious Crimes deserve the utmost Rigour of human Punishments. On the other hand, the Number of well-deserving Subjects, and their Services, may be too great for the scanty Treasures of a liberal Prince, to reward in any Proportion to their real Merit.

But 'tis far otherwise here. There is with the great God, an Unlimited Power to execute that Judgment that his Inflexible Justice does award, and that to the utmost Degree of our Demerits, and much more above what we can pretend to deserve. Human Punishments can only immediately reach the Body, and Death always puts an End to them.

'Tis God alone, that can make us completely happy or miserable, and that for ever. He has all the Springs of our Nature in his Hand, and can give us the strongest as well as most durable Sensations of Pleasure or of Pain. He can inflict Torments that are both endless and intolerable. He can fill our Souls with that Extremity of Anguish and Despair, against which there is no Possibility of Relief. He *lives for ever*, and therefore can *punish for ever*. Men only can kill the Body, but he can *destroy both Body and Soul in Hell for ever*, *Matth. x. 28*. He can assign us a Reward suited to the utmost Capacities and Duration of our Nature: He has all the Treasures of Heaven and Earth, of Grace and Glory in his Hand, and can bestow an Happiness on us as far beyond our Conceptions as beyond our Deserts. He can be an Eternal as well as an exceeding great Reward. None knows either the Power of his vindictive Wrath, or the Extent of his remunerative Goodness. There is no superior Tribunal to reverse his Sentence; and no superior Power to stop the Execution of it. And 'tis fit that he alone should finally judge the World, who alone can fully reward and punish all the Inhabitants thereof.

Thus you see, That God alone is possessed of all those glorious Perfections that capacitate him for the Exercise of his Right to judge the World, and may assure us of the Righteousness and Equity of his Judgment.

I now come,

Thirdly, To consider what Evidence the Light of Nature does furnish us with concerning the Certainty of a future Judgment.

For indeed, a due Consideration of that Proof which the *Light of Nature* does suggest to us to convince us of this great Truth, may be of great use to facilitate our Belief of those clearer and fuller Discoveries we have concerning it from *supernatural Revelation*. For this is a Principle of *Natural* as well as of *Revealed Religion*.

Now the Certainty of a future Judgment may be justly inferred from such common but solid and substantial Arguments as these.

1. From the *Perfections of God's Nature* compared with the *present Administrations of his Providence*.

2. From those *Actings of our own Consciences*, that have a plain reference and subserviency to such a future Judgment.

3. From the general Consent of Mankind in the Acknowledgment of this Truth.

I here omit the Evidence we have from *Supernatural Revelation*, because that will occur under the fourth general Head.

I. We may infer the Certainty of a future Judgment from the *Perfections of God's Nature*, compared with the *present Administrations of his Providence*.

It was a just Observation of Cicero, That the Epicureans in denying the Providence of God, did by just

construction deny his very Being. And indeed as to all the Purposes of Religion, 'tis the same thing to believe, That *there is no God* as to believe, That *he utterly abandons the Care and Government of that World that he has made*. I shall therefore at present take it for granted, That *there is a God* that made this World by his Power, and Rules in it by his Providence. And indeed, this latter Truth is as legibly engraven upon the admirable Order and mutual Subserviency and regular Motions of the constituent Parts of this visible World, as the former is engraven upon their very Beings. And sure we, that see inferior Creatures under the steady Conduct of such a sovereign and universal Providence, have no reason to suppose God's reasonable Creatures (the noblest part of his Workmanship) excluded from the Care of it. Supposing then such a Providence, all the Question will be, Whether the present Dispensations of it towards this lower World, can be consistent with the undoubted Perfections of his Nature, without the Supposition of a future Judgment? All that own a God, must acknowledge him to be a *Being of most perfect Wisdom*, and *Justice and Goodness*. But how can we suppose the great Ruler of the World to be possessed of these adorable Perfections, if we take our Measures of him by his present *Administrations*, and exclude the Consideration of a *Judgment to come*?

'Tis a just Observation that the wise Man makes concerning the present course of Things, and which he complains of as a great *Evil under the Sun*, That *all Things come alike to all; That there is one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked; To the Good and Clean, and to the Unclean; To him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not; As is the Good so is the Sinner; And he that sweareth as he that feareth an Oath; Eccles. ix. 2*. But where is the Justice and Goodness of the great Ruler of the World, if he make no remarkable difference between those that observe and those that violate his holy Laws? If he always carry it with an undistinguishing Hand towards those that fear and love, and those that hate and affront him? How irresistible a Temptation would this be (without the Supposition of a future Audit and Judgment) to conclude, either that *God does not govern the World*, and *has given no Laws to Mankind*, or that *he is wholly indifferent and unconcerned whether they obey them or no*? And if we should think such an indifferency an inexcusable Blemish on the Reputation of an earthly Prince, and wholly inconsistent with either Justice or Goodness, we must needs think it a much more irreparable Stain on the Glory of the Divine Government, and irreconcilable with those Perfections that belong to the great and universal Sovereign. And yet this is really the Case, if there be no future Judgment, in which a righteous and good God will put a manifest and discernable difference between the Righteous and the Wicked, between him that serves him and him that serves him not. Nay, where is the Wisdom of God, if he never rectify this seeming Confusion and Disorder? If in his moral Government he leave these glorious Perfections under a perpetual Cloud and Obscurity? If as to the general course of his Administrations, none ever fare the better for their Obedience and Fidelity to him, or the worse for their Rebellion and Disobedience? How then should that Essential Justice of his Nature be known, that prompts him to *give to every one according to their Works*? How should that Goodness appear that inclines him *liberally to reward those that diligently seek him*? And will a God of infinite Wisdom so govern the World, as to leave no Traces of Justice and Goodness upon his Administrations? Will he always suffer the Glory of these adorable Excellencies to lie under a perpetual Eclipse?

Nay, there is a far more insuperable Objection against the Conduct of Divine Providence, if we admit not the Supposition of a future Judgment. For 'tis no unusual thing to observe a far greater Evil un-

der the Sun, viz. To see just Men to whom it happens according to the work of the Wicked, and wicked Men to whom it happens according to the work of the Righteous, Eccles. viii. 14. How often do we behold the Tears and hear the Groans of oppressed Innocence, on the one hand, and the Triumphs of powerful Oppressors on the other? How often do we see an eminent Saint clothed with Rags, and like Lazarus, lying at the rich Man's door, and desirous to feed on the crumbs that fall from his Table, while the rich Sensualist himself is clothed in Purple and Scarlet, and fares sumptuously every day? How often do we behold despised Piety on the Dunghil, and prosperous Wickedness on the Throne? Nay, how often does Men's Reverence of God and his Laws, and their Zeal and Fidelity in his Service expose them to the greatest of Sufferings, (even to the loss of Life and all the valuable Comforts thereof) while the successful Crimes of others often raise them to the greatest height of Temporal Felicity and Glory? How frequent occasion have good Men to renew the bitter Complaints of Job and of Asaph, concerning the uninterrupted Prosperity of the Wicked, who live and become old, and mighty in power, having their Seed established in their sight and their Off-spring before their Eyes, &c. while the Righteous are plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, and have the Waters of a full (but bitter) Cup wrung out to them? Compare the Twenty-first of Job with the Seventy-first Psalm. And how shall we reconcile such Events as these with the Justice and Goodness of God, if we suppose that he suffers afflicted Piety to go for ever unrewarded, and prosperous Wickedness to go for ever unpunished? Nay, what injurious Apprehensions must we entertain of the great Ruler of the World, if we suppose his Providence so often to establish such a present Connexion between Impiety and Temporal Happiness, and between Virtue and Misery, if there be no Judgment to come, and no future Rewards and Punishments to rectify this seeming Irregularity, and to justify the Conduct of Providence in such Events as seem to cast the greatest Blemish and Reproach upon it. For to those that look'd no farther than this present Life, these Events have appeared such a monstrous Deformity in the Conduct of Providence, as have strongly tempted them to the dis-belief of it. And indeed, their dis-belief of it seems very Excusable, if there were no future Judgment to salve these formidable Objections against it, and to manifest the Consistency of it with the Justice and Benignity of the Divine Nature.

'Tis true indeed, that sometimes the Providence of God has remarkably interposed in rewarding the Piety of good Men, with an eminent degree of Temporal Prosperity and Happiness. And his Justice has sometimes signaliz'd it self by exemplary Instances of its Severity against enormous Sinners, even by such Temporal Judgments as have carried the Nature of their Crimes engraven on them.

But these Instances of God's Rewarding Goodness and Punishing Justice here, are so rare, that they are no way capable to counter-balance the strong Objections drawn against the Justice and Goodness of God from the more general Course of his Providence; which Objections would be still unanswerable without the Supposition of a future Judgment. For what would it signify to clear the Justice of Providence, that it does inflict exemplary Punishment on a few Offenders, when it not only suffers many Thousands equally guilty to escape; nay, is so far from punishing them here, as rather to confer and heap all imaginable Temporal Favours and Benefits upon

them? And what would it signify to vindicate the Goodness of God here, that he visibly rewards the Piety of a few good Men, when the generality of them not only are no visible Gainers, but are like to be irreparable Losers by their Loyalty and dutiful Affection to him? And yet this is manifestly the Case, if there be no Judgment to come, and no future Rewards and Punishments awarded by it.

Now to strengthen this Argument, I would briefly subjoin these two Considerations.

The One is, That there are many prosperous Sinners in this World above the reach of human Justice, and such therefore as God alone can judge and punish. Such is the Case of all those potent Oppressors and proud Nimrods of the Earth, that fill it with Cruelty and Violence; whose Crimes as far transcend that of ordinary Sinners in their Extent and Aggravation, as they are exalted above them in Grandure and Power. And what shall we think of the Justice of the Judge of the whole Earth, if such Sinners of the first Magnitude shall escape with visible Impunity; if such Monsters of Wickedness shall be as unaccountable at the Bar of God, as they pretend to be at the Bar of Men; and have as little to fear from his Vengeance, as they have from any human Court of Judicature? Men cannot punish them, and God does not observably punish many of them in this World; and where then is the Justice of the Universal Sovereign, if he reserve them not to his Judgment in the World to come? On this Supposition, the most hainous of all Offenders will seem in the Eye of the World to be his greatest Favourites, and those that of all Men have most deserved his vindictive Severity, will never remarkably feel it at all.

The other is, That the malignant Effects of many Mens Crimes do extend far beyond the Limits of their own Life, even to future Generations: Even such pernicious Effects as they might easily foresee would reach to succeeding Ages. And since the Authors of them go unpunished here, What should we think of the Justice of God, if he reserve them not to a future Account? Thus the sanguinary Laws of some Princes extend their destructive Influence to succeeding Reigns, and involve the Throne in the guilt of innocent Blood for many Generations. So do the wicked Sentences of unjust Judges, not only destroy the Property or the Lives of many innocent Sufferers, but are a perpetual and irreparable Wrong to all their Posterity. And the like may be observed of those leud and profane, or Infidel-Writers, the poisonous Contagion of whose cursed Books diffuses it self in the World, to the Infection of others, long after the Authors are in their Graves: Where then is the Justice of God, if such Wretches not only escape here, but are by Death put for ever out of the reach of Divine Vengeance; so that though the cursed Effects of their Wickedness continue to many Ages, they themselves are for ever unaccountable for them?

But now, upon the Supposition of such a future Judgment, and the endless Rewards and Punishments that shall ensue it; all these Objections against God's present Administrations are fully answered; all these seeming Difficulties of Providence are fully solved; the Justice and Goodness of God are vindicated; the Wisdom and Beauty of Providence is displayed: There appears an admirable Congruity in its present Methods, that a few Instances of Rewarding Goodness and Punitive Justice should be exhibited in this State of Trial, to remind the World of a Judgment to come; but that the full Display of these adorable Perfections should be reserved to a future State, and that this State of Trial should be preparatory to it.

S E R M O N VIII.

On the Certainty of a Future Judgment.

xvii Acts 30, 31.

30 And the Times of this Ignorance G O D winked at, but now commandeth all Men every where to repent.

31 Because he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Assurance to all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.



HAVE already from these Words proposed these Heads of Instruction.

I. That God will certainly judge the World in Righteousness.

II. That there is a Day, or Time appointed, for that End.

III. That he will judge the World by the Man, Christ Jesus, as his Commissioner.

IV. That he hath given all Men assurance hereof, by raising him from the Dead.

V. That the Consideration of that future Judgment is a proper and powerful Argument to excite all Men to serious Repentance.

I begin with the

I. *Viz.* That God will certainly judge the World in Righteousness.

In speaking hereto, I proposed

I. To shew, That the Right of Judging the World does originally belong to God alone.

II. That all those Perfections are to be found in God alone, that capacitate him for the Exercise of that Right, and assure us of the Equity of his final Sentence.

Of these two Heads I have already treated, and I now proceed,

III. To shew, What Evidence we have even from the Light of Nature, concerning the Certainty of such a final Judgment.

And here I proposed to take Notice of such Arguments for it as arise;

First, From the adorable Perfections of God's Nature, compared with the present Administrations of his Providence.

This Argument I have at large insisted on in the former Discourse.

Now, this is utterly inconsistent with the Wisdom and Justice, and Goodness of God in the Government of the World, without the Supposition of a future Judgment, and the Rewards and Punishments that shall then be dispensed. Whereas, that Supposition solves all these (otherwise unanswerable) Objections against Providence, and every way vindicates the Wisdom and Equity, and displays the Beauty and Regularity of its Administrations.

But,

Secondly, We may argue for the Certainty of a future Judgment from those *Actings* of our own Consci-

ences that have a manifest Reference and Subserviency thereto.

The great Judge of the whole World, to remind all Mankind of his own Judgment-Seat; has erected a Tribunal in every Man's Breast in Subordination thereto. Conscience (where the genuine Exercise of its self-reflexive Power is not wilfully stifled and suppressed) does in every Man act the part of a Witness; and that also of a Judge, both in passing a Judgment upon our Actions, and in dispensing something of present Rewards and Punishments.

1. Conscience acts the part of an inferior Judge, in reviewing and passing a present Judgment upon our Actions.

'Tis for this End that God has endued us with that admirable Power of Self-Reflexion, that we may look back on our own moral Actions. And therefore our Consciences, as the faithful Witnesses for God in our own Breast, first bring a clear and undeniable Evidence as to our past Actions, in order to its Approbation or Censure of them. And the Evidence concerning Matter of Fact being once given in, Conscience proceeds to compare it with the Law of God. (Either that *Law written* in the Heart, which is common to all Mankind, among whom some Notices of Good or Evil, of Sin or Duty are preserved, or the *written Law* also, as to those that enjoy the benefit of supernatural Revelation.) And upon the comparison, our own Thoughts accuse or excuse us, *i. e.* they pronounce our Actions to be Good or Evil, conformable or disconformable to the Will and Law of God, and accordingly either acquit or condemn us, either applaud and commend, or blame and reproach us, *Rom. ii. 15.*

Now that this Judgment, which Conscience passes on our moral Actions, is subservient and preparatory to the final Judgment of God, is evident from several Considerations.

Conscience does as truly thus acquit or condemn us for Actions that none but God and our own Souls are conscious to, as for those that fall under the Cognizance and Observation of Men. Conscience as truly applauds and approves us for the most secret Exercises of Religion in our Closets (when we there in secret pour out our Hearts to our heavenly Father) as for those Acts of publick Devotion in which we join with religious Assemblies. On the other hand, Con-

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science does as severely challenge and condemn us for our most hidden Acts of Wickedness, which no Eye but that of God beholds, as for those Sins which we commit in the face of the Sun. Nay, Conscience does as truly reproach us for the Impurities of our Thoughts and inward Desires and Intentions, as for our criminal Words and Works. And even in those Acts of Dissimulation towards God and Men, which carry a fair Outside and Appearance, and therefore often recommend us to the good Opinion of fallible Men; Conscience that is Witness to our vile Hypocrisy therein, does often upbraid and condemn us for those very Actions for which our ignorant Fellow-Creatures (who discern not the contrariety between our external Profession and our inward Disposition, between the Language of our Lips, and that of our Hearts) are ready to applaud and admire us.

Conscience often condemns us for those Sins which no human Law forbids, which no human Courts of Judicature take any Cognizance of, which are a Violation of no other Law but that of God's and cognizable at no other Tribunal but his. Nay, Conscience, in imitation of that Universal Sovereign, whose Deputy it is, exercises its judicial Power over the greatest of earthly Princes, as well as over the meanest of their Subjects. It accuses and reproaches those proud Tyrants, whom all their servile Attendants flatter and idolize. It calls those to an Account for their Crimes, and passes its impartial condemning Sentence upon them, who are above the reach and fear of being accountable to Men. 'Tis not to be brib'd and aw'd by human Greatness and Power. 'Tis not afraid to speak that bold Language to the greatest earthly Monarch, which none of their Subjects dare use. Conscience, that speaks in the Name of the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, thinks it no way incongruous, to say to a King, *Thou art wicked, and to Princes, Ye are ungodly*, John xxxiv. 18.

Now, what can we think of these noble Acts of Conscience in the Exercise of its self-reflexive and judicial Power, but that they are a prelude of God's final Judgment, and a kind of solemn Citation and Summons to appear at his Bar? We cannot think of any Methods more universal, more extensive, and effectual than this, to forwarn all Mankind of that final Judgment, and to awaken them to serious Preparation for it. For how reasonable and just is the Inference, that if our own Hearts condemn us, God, who is greater than our Hearts, and knows all things, can, and will do it much more; Whereas, if our own Hearts condemn us not (i. e. upon impartial Self-Trial,) then may we have confidence towards God. So that either we must regard these judicial Actings of Conscience as preparatory to the final Judgment of God, or we must accuse all Mankind of a mean but unaccountable Subjection to a frightful Bug-bear, and to most groundless and unreasonable Imaginations. But if these Actings of Conscience be the most exalted and valuable Exercise of our own reasonable Powers, they carry with them the clearest Notices, and surest Presages of a future Judgment.

Especially if we add,

2. That Conscience also acts the part of an inferior Judge in Rewarding or Punishing us for those moral Actions which it passes its Judgment upon.

And indeed, the Power of Conscience is considerable in the remarkable Effects which its Sentence produces, accordingly as it does Acquit or Condemn. The Testimony of a good Conscience, is a Spring of inward Serenity and Peace, of Consolation and Joy, and raises us to lively Hopes of a great and glorious Reward. Whereas, the Challenges and Reproaches of an accusing Conscience fill us with inward Shame and Confusion, Disquiet and Remorse, and those Terrors and Fears which the sense of Guilt naturally inspires. A good Conscience is a continual Feast. Its Approbation and Applause pro-

duces a sweet Calm and Exultation of Soul from the Apprehensions of Divine Favour and Acceptance. But where it censures and condemns, it has its secret Lashes and Stings to torment the guilty Offender with. And so marvellous is the Power of Conscience in thus Rewarding or Punishing, and so resembling that of the great Judge of the World, that no human Power can controul the Execution of its Sentence. If Conscience acquit a good Man, its Testimony is a solid Support against all the unjust Reproaches and Calumnies of Men. And all the World cannot rob him of the inward Satisfaction and Peace that the inward Persuasion of his own Innocence and Integrity yield to him. And if Conscience inwardly condemn, no Applauses of servile Flatterers, no Security from human Punishment, no Affluence of carnal Delights, can protect a guilty Sinner from the inward Anguish and Horror, and from the fearful Presages of his own trembling Mind. Even Infidels and Atheists themselves, after they have done their utmost to stupify Conscience, cannot wholly free themselves from the unwelcome Exercise of its judicial Power. Conscience does haunt them as a perpetual Ghost. They ever and anon feel its terrible Rebukes, and painful Tortures, and bitter Pangs, and affrightful Forebodings. And against these there is no Defence to be made. I might here recite many excellent Passages of Heathen Moralists themselves to this Purpose.

And how plainly does this tell us, that Conscience is Gods Deputy in our own Breasts: That its Sentence is the Forerunner of his; and its remarkable Effects the Emblem of his Eternal Rewards and Punishments? If the Bar of Conscience were not subordinate to the higher Tribunal of God, Why should all Men, even the worst of Men pay such a blind and unwilling submission to its Sentence? How comes its Approbation or Censure to carry such an irresistible Force in filling us with inward Comfort, and joyful Hope, or with inward Perplexity and terrifying Fear? How wonderful an Emblem is its Tribunal herein of the great God's, who has the Springs of our Nature in his Hand, and can make us happy or miserable by the inward Workings of our own Passions and Thoughts! And shall we think that God has invested Conscience with this judicial Power in vain? Can we trace its judicial Process in our own Bosoms, and not think of the Judgment of the great Day? Will not He judge us at last, who has given us such a Faculty and Inclination to judge our selves?

But,

Thirdly, We may argue the Certainty of a future Judgment from the general consent of Mankind, in the Acknowledgment of this Truth.

'Tis indeed true, that as to the particular Process of that final Judgment and the Eternal Issues of it, the Heathen World had but very dark and confused Notions. But 'tis as true, that the Apprehensions of such a future Judgment in general did almost universally prevail among them. And that gave rise to all their fabulous Accounts of the Infernal Judges, and of the different Places of Abode in the Regions below, for the Vertuous and the Vitious. They were not wholly ignorant of this Judgment of God, and of his dispensing future Rewards and Punishments, according to the different Qualities and Actions of Men. And the same Sentiments do now obtain not only among the Mahometans, but in the most known Parts of the Pagan World. So that God does actually govern the World by the Fears and Hopes of such a future Judgment. And we are sure 'tis inconsistent with his Wisdom, as well as his Truth, to rule the World by a gross Delusion and Lye. He has no possible Temptation to impose any such Deceit upon us, by thus deluding and mocking us with false Hopes, and affrighting us with imaginary Dangers and Fears. We may therefore conclude, That these Expectations of a future Judgment are not groundless and vain, but

but implanted in our Souls by the Author of our Beings.

Before I proceed to make any *Practical Reflexions* on this Head, I shall speak somewhat briefly to the

II. *Viz.* That there is a Day, or Time appointed when God will thus judge the World in Righteousness.

For though the Scriptures speak of the Time of future Judgment under the Notion of a Day; there is no Necessity or Reason of understanding this of so scanty a Portion of Time, as that of a Natural Day. We read of the whole Time of God's gracious Visitation towards a People under that Notion of a Day. There is a Day of Grace and Salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2. And this is called *Man's Day*: O that thou hadst known (saith our Lord to Jerusalem) in this thy Day, the things that belong to thy Peace! Luke xix. 42. On the other hand, the Time of God's destructive Vengeance on a People, is also called a Day; and that is properly *God's Day*, that commences when *Man's Day* of Visitation is past and over. But this Season, or Time of future Judgment, is called *The Day of the Lord*, by way of Eminency. Sometimes 'tis called *that Day*, as if no other Day were comparable to it, 2 Tim. i. 18. 'Tis called *The Day of the Lord*, because 'tis God's Time of final Retribution that succeeds our Time of Probation and Trial. 'Tis called *The Last Day*; because the solemn Transactions thereof will be the conclusive Act of God's Providence towards this lower World, that shall shut up this transitory Scene of Time, and open that of a boundless Eternity, John vi. 39. 'Tis called the *Great Day*, by way of Emphasis, because the Transactions thereof are of the highest moment and consequence; no less Matters being then to be finally and irreversibly decided, than those of our Acquittal or Condemnation, that shall adjudge us to a State of endless and unchangeable Happiness or Misery. See Jude vi. And to add no more, 'Tis called *The Day of Christ*, because he will then visibly appear invested with this Royal Authority to judge the Quick and Dead. (Of which more hereafter.)

When indeed, that Time will commence, it were great Presumption for us to pretend we can fore-know or determine. To check any needless Curiosity that way, we are told, That of that Day and Hour knows no Man, no not the Angels, nor the Son (i. e. the Son of Man) but the Father. And what Arrogance were it for us to penetrate into his Counsels, who keeps the Times and Seasons of such glorious Events in his own hand, and to think we can discover what our blessed Saviour himself had never in his Instructions to reveal?

But this we do know, That this Day commences at the General Resurrection, when all that are in their Graves shall hear the Voice of the Son of God, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the Resurrection of Life, and those that have done evil to the Resurrection of Damnation, John v. 28, 29. For (as I suggested before) the final Judgment is the conclusive Act of Divine Providence, that shall put an End to the successive Generations of Mankind, and to that Day of Probation and Trial they have here enjoyed, and to that Kingdom of Grace that is preparatory for that of Glory; and this by such a final Retribution, as shall fully vindicate the Conduct of Providence, and display his infinite Wisdom, his inflexible Justice and spotless Holiness, and boundless Clemency and Goodness, and marvellous Patience and Long-suffering in all his Administrations.

And 'tis therefore highly congruous to the Wisdom of God, that the Time appointed for this final Judgment should be future, and should be at the End of the World.

'Tis highly congruous that it should be future.

Were Men to be visibly judged in this World, while this State of Trial lasts, were they to be visibly rewarded or punished before our Eyes in this Life; how would this detract from the Glory, and lessen

the Value of the Vertues and Obedience of the sincerely good?

'Tis the height of true Piety to adore and serve an invisible God, in opposition to all the present Temptations of a flattering or frowning World, and that from a steady Faith in his Promises, concerning an unseen and future Reward. But there would be no great occasion for the Exercise of such a Divine Faith, if the Process of Divine Judgment, in visibly rewarding particular Saints, and punishing particular Sinners, were daily presented to our View. Where would the great Temptation to Wickedness lie, if we continually beheld vast multitudes of Sinners as it were hung up alive in Chains, and made in our sight the fearful Examples of a terrible Vengeance? Who would not thereby be affrighted from the destructive Paths of Sin? Nay, where would the great Trial of our Graces and Vertues be, if the Rewards of it were present and visible to an Eye of Sense? Piety in this case would look rather like the Effect of Necessity than Choice, when the visible Flames of Justice every where appear to affright and scare Men from sinning, and when our Obedience should scarce meet with any considerable Difficulties and Discouragements for the Trial of it.

Nay, how improper a Place would this Earth be for Divine Judgment, and the present visible Executions thereof, here? The terrible Examples of Divine Severity, in the Punishment of Sinners, would render this Earth too like to Hell, (even a Scene of Horror and Misery) to be a desirable Abode for the Righteous. While we carry with us such Bowels of Pity, we cannot behold the sharp Sufferings even of hainous Malefactors, without some uneasy Commotion and Disturbance: But how much more unwelcome and frightful a Scene would this Earth be, if filled every where with the tremendous Executions of Divine Severity and Vengeance, especially if many of the wretched Sufferers were our own Relations and Friends, whom we have the tenderest sympathy with. 'Tis every way congruous then to the Wisdom of God, that this awful Work of Judgment should be reserved to another and unseen State; That in reference to it, we should walk by Faith, and not by Sight; That here our Obedience should have its due Trial, by conquering all the Temptations of this sensible World, through the lively Faith of invisible Realities; That the difference which the final Judgment will make between the Righteous and the Wicked, should not now appear to sense, but be assented to on the Credit of Promises and Threatnings of the God of Truth, and the Veracity and Truth of God be glorified, by relying on it for the Certainty of these future Events.

And 'tis no less congruous, that this final Judgment should be transacted at the End of the World.

I do not indeed deny, That there is a particular Judgment that passes on every one at Death, or something analogous to it. There is no doubt, that particular dislodged Souls are, according to their Works, received into the Mansions of the blessed, or thrust down into the Regions of Darkness. We read of dying Lazarus, being carried by Angels into Abraham's Bosom, but of the rich Man's being in the Place of Torment. And therefore every Man's Actions are at Death so far scann'd and consider'd by the distributive Justice of God, as is necessary to their being adjudged to a State of initial Happiness or Misery, that will give them a joyful or terrible Prospect of the final Issues of the great and last Day.

But such a particular and comparatively private Judgment does no way fully answer the great End of God's Government, viz. the publick Manifestation of his Rewarding Goodness and Punishing Justice in the view of Angels and Men. And 'tis chiefly for this reason that he has appointed a Day, or particular Time for this awful Solemnity. And that is always represented in Scripture, as commencing at the End of this World.

World. 'Tis when all Nations are gathered before the Son of Man: 'tis when all the Dead, small and great, stand before God; when the Sea shall give up the Dead which were in it, and Death and Hell shall deliver up the Dead which were in them; that then they shall be judged, every Man according to his Works. (See Matth. xxv. 31, 32, &c. compared with Rev. xx. 12, 13.)

'Tis then that the Omnipresence and Omniscience of God will be marvellously display'd in revealing the Secrets of all Hearts before that vast Assembly. 'Tis then the Goodness of God shall shine in its brightest Lustre, in vindicating the Innocence of his faithful Servants, and assigning them a Reward infinitely transcending all their Services and Sufferings. 'Tis then the *Vindictive Justice* of God will appear in its tremendous Glory, to avenge all the Affronts offered to his holy Laws, and all the Injuries and Abuses done to his Patience and Pity. Then will both Angels and Men behold and applaud the Wisdom, the Equity, the Purity, the Justice and Goodness of all God's Administrations, and carry away with them the fullest Convictions of the Impartiality of his Sentence. None will then have reason to complain, That the least of their faithful Services (how secret however) have been overlook'd and neglected, and are like to go unrewarded. And none shall be able to say, that any of their Injuries and Wrongs have gone unavenged. Nor shall the closest Hypocrite have any reason to applaud his own Subtily, or boast of his escaping with Impunity. No, Angels and Men shall go away from that righteous Tribunal with so full and clear Satisfaction, concerning the Equity of every One's Doom, as will eternally silence all Objections against the Government of God, and even render those speechless (as to any Apology or Defence) whom it shall condemn.

From these Considerations it appears, how highly congruous it is to the Wisdom of God, and how conducive to the Illustration of his own Glory, that this great Affair should be openly and publicly transacted in the face of the World. And consequently that it should be delayed, till all the successive Generations of Mankind have acted their several Parts on the Stage of this Earth, and till the Scene of Time shall be shut up.

It now remains, that I make some Practical Reflexions upon these two Heads, viz. That God will certainly judge the World in Righteousness; and, That there is a Day, or Time appointed for that End.

Will God certainly judge the World in Righteousness? Then,

I. We may hence see how unreasonable all our Objections against Divine Providence are from the present Administrations thereof.

What, though the Administrations of Providence are at present for the most part promiscuous, and that he dispenses present Temporal Good or Evil with a seemingly undistinguishing hand. 'Tis but reasonable it should be so in a State of Trial, in which Men are chiefly to be influenced by the Hopes of a future Reward, and the Fears of a future Punishment. The force of those excellent Motives will best appear in a State, in which no Man knows Love or Hatred by the things that are before him, Eccles. ix. 1. It will then appear, That good Men are excited to persevere in their Duty from higher Considerations than what are drawn from this World, and can trust the Goodness of God for the Happiness and Rewards of a better.

Nay, what though the present Administrations of Providence seem in some Instances contrary to his Justice and Goodness, as in the uninterrupted Prosperity of the Wicked and Calamities of the Righteous! This has been a dangerous Stumbling-block and Objection to good Men of old. This occasioned such melancholly Reflexions in pious Job, and drew from good Ahab so despondent Language as that, *That he had in vain cleansed his heart, and washed his hands*

in Innocence. See Job xxi. 6, 7. &c. Psal. lxxiii. 13. This put them so often upon earnest Expostulations with God about the way of his Judgments. See Jer. xii. 1. Hab. i. 12, 13. But how do all these Difficulties vanish, when once the Solemnity of a final impartial Judgment appears in our View! Who would regret or complain of those light and momentary Afflictions of the Righteous that shall work for them an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory! Who would envy that short-liv'd Prosperity of the Wicked, that shall only fit and prepare those Vessels of Wrath for destruction, and render them the more unexceptionable, but terrible Instances of Divine Severity and Justice! The longest and sharpest Sufferings of the one shall be rewarded above all that we can desire or conceive. And the most successful and prosperous Wickedness of the other, shall be punish'd far above what the greatest Provocations of those they injure, and oppress could tempt them to wish. Then shall every secret Conspiracy be discovered; every unrighteous Sentence of earthly Courts of Judicature be reversed; every hidden Crime detected; every ambiguous Cause and Controversy decided; every doubtful and dark Providence unveiled; and then the Beauty of Providence shall be displayed; the regularity and harmony of all its Administrations shall appear; and the Wisdom and Equity of all its Dispensations be put for ever beyond any possible Dispute. And how should this Consideration relieve our Minds under those Methods of Providence that appear at present most obscure and intricate, most unaccountable and unsearchable by us!

II. From the Certainty of God's judging the World in Righteousness, we may infer, how much this great Event should command our most serious and attentive Thoughts.

That 'tis every way worthy of our frequent and awful Contemplation, will easily appear if we consider,

1. 'Tis an Affair of the most glorious Solemnity in it self.

To be deeply affected with the Expectation of great Events that are yet to come, is a noble Passion peculiar to the Soul of Man, preparing us to receive in the most lively and sensible manner any approaching Good or Evil. And the more any thing is capable to raise it in us, the more effectually it will command our earnest Attention. Now what Event can appear so amazingly great to a considerate Mind, and so fit to arrest our Thoughts in the Contemplations of it as this of a future Judgment? In comparison thereof, all those Transactions that make the greatest noise in this World, and are managed with the greatest Pomp and Magnificence, are comparatively, but a trifling and despicable Scene. We think it some great matter for a Person of eminent Quality to be try'd in an earthly Court of Judicature, and the Minds of all are wont to be very intent upon the Issue of it. But, alas! how small a matter is the Judgment of an earthly Court, and how little comparatively depends upon it!

What then shall we think of that amazing Scene that shall appear to our View, when God shall come to judge the World in Righteousness. When Angels and Men shall then stand before the Throne of the supreme Law-giver and Judge, to receive from him their respective and irreversible Dooms! O what an astonishing and awful Solemnity will this be! How numerous will that vast Assembly be! And how glorious and magnificent will the Judge appear! (Of which more hereafter. Of how infinite moment are the matters to be there transacted and decided! How justly may this be called the great and terrible Day of the Lord! Joel ii. 11. To some indeed, such a Day of Triumph and Joy as their Eyes never beheld before; but to others a Day of no less unspeakable Horror and Amazement. And surely, since we profess to believe, and may by Faith foresee the near

Approach

Approach of it, no Subject should more effectually engage our Thoughts. We should often take off our Eyes from the contemptible Vanities of this World, to fix them on this astonishing Scene, this last and conclusive Act of God's providential Government towards this lower World.

Especially, if we consider further,
2. That this final Judgment is an Affair of the highest moment and consequence to our selves.

Were we to be shortly try'd for our Lives at the Bar of an earthly Judge, we should as soon forget our selves as the hazardous Case we are in. We should often think of the Cause we are like to be try'd for, of the Indictment and Accusation that is like to be drawn up against us, of the Defence and Plea we have to make, and of the Issue we may probably expect from the determination of a just Judge. We should find it difficult to banish such Thoughts as these out of our Minds. Our deep concern and fear would almost irresistibly force them upon us.

But, O how infinitely more important Concerns of ours are to be transacted and determined on that awful Day in which God will judge the World in Righteousness! What is an earthly Judge (a poor Worm like our selves) compared with the Eternal Majesty of Heaven, before whose Tribunal we must stand! What are the few Attendants and Spectators of an earthly Court, to that vast Convention of Angels and Men, before whom all our Actions shall be examined and disclosed, and before whom we are like to come

off with everlasting Honour and Applause, or Shame and Contempt! What is it to be try'd, whether we are innocent or guilty, according to the Laws of Men, and consequently, whether we shall save or lose a momentary Life, in comparison of being try'd by the Statute-Law of Heaven, and being adjudged to Live or Die, to be Happy or Miserable for ever! How inconsiderable are the Issues of a Trial in an earthly Court of Judicature! How little have we to hope or fear from human Justice! But, O how unconceivable will the Blessedness and Joy of Acquitted Saints, and the Misery and Despair of Condemned Sinners be! What may we not hope from the boundless Mercy, or fear from the inflexible Justice of God, accordingly as he passes a favourable or severe Doom upon us!

And shall we not then think often on this great Day, in the Issues whereof we are so infinitely concerned! What reason have we to put it far from us, by imagining it to be at a great distance, since we know not but one Year, one Week, nay, one Day may put an End to our State of Trial; and then, as Death leaves us, Judgment will find us. Sure then, the serious Thoughts of a future Judgment should continually follow us, should lie down and rise up with us. The sound of the last Trump should be continually in our Ears. What our Eyes shall so soon behold to our unspeakable Joy or Horror, should be the frequent Subject of our retired and warm Contemplations.

S E R M O N IX.

On the Certainty of a Future Judgment.

xvii Acts 30, 31.

30 And the Times of this Ignorance GOD winked at, but now commandeth all Men every where to repent.

31 Because he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Assurance to all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.



HAVE already from the Words insisted on these two Heads, viz.

I. That God will certainly judge the World in Righteousness.

II. That there is a Day, or Time that he hath appointed for that End.

I now proceed to the

III. Branch of the Text, viz. That God will judge the World by the Man, Christ Jesus, as his Commissioner.

In speaking hereto, I shall,

I. Consider, how clearly the Gospel asserts this Article of our Religion, That God will judge the World by the Man, Christ Jesus.

II. I shall consider the Wisdom and Reasonableness of this Constitution, That Christ should be ordained as the Judge of the World.

I. I shall briefly consider, how clearly the Gospel asserts this Article of our Religion, That God will

judge the World by that Man whom he hath ordained, even by Jesus Christ.

And indeed, this important Truth is engraven there as with a Pen of Iron and the point of a Diamond. Our Saviour himself fully declares it, That the Father judges no Man (i. e. immediately) but hath committed all Judgment to the Son. That he has given him Authority to execute Judgment, because he is the Son of Man. And that the hour is coming in which all that are in their Graves shall bear his Voice, and shall come forth, they that have done good to the Resurrection of Life, and they that have done evil to the Resurrection of Damnation. See John v. 22, 26, 28, 29. It was part of that Profession which he sealed with his Blood, That they should see him sitting on the right hand of Power, and coming in the Clouds of Heaven, Matt. xxvi. 64. (Expressions which, in their highest sense, refer to that future Judgment.) The Angels published the same Doctrine at our Lords Ascension, telling

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his Disciples, That *that same Jesus whom they had seen taken up into Heaven, should so come in the same manner as they had seen him go into Heaven*, Acts i. 11. Accordingly, the Apostles on all occasions deliver this as one of the essential Truths of the Gospel. Thus Peter, when sent to preach the Gospel to devout Cornelius, insists particularly on this one great Branch of it, That our Saviour was raised from the Dead, and had commanded them to preach to the People, and to testify, That 'tis he which is ordained of God to be the Judge of the Quick and the Dead, Acts x. 42. This Doctrine the Apostle Paul in my Text preaches to the Gentiles at Athens, and uses it as an Argument to awaken them to serious Repentance. And the same Apostle enforces his Charge to Timothy by this awful consideration of our Lord Jesus's judging the Quick and the Dead. See 1 Pet. iv. 5. And our blessed Lord in his Epistles to his Churches, ascribes to himself the judicial Power of dispensing final Rewards and Punishments. See Rev. ii. 10. *Be thou faithful to thy Death, and I will give thee a Crown of Life*, Rev. iii. 12, 21. &c.

And accordingly, the triumphant manner of his final Appearance is frequently described in such Expressions as give us raised Expectations of the transcendent Magnificence and Glory of it. Sometimes he is represented as coming in the Glory of his Father; partly, as he shall then be vested with that Royal Authority that originally belongs to God, but shall be then exercised by him as the Father's Commissioner; and partly, as he shall come with that Retinue and Attendance of the Holy Angels, that all the glorious Appearances of God to Men were wont to be accompanied with. And it will then indeed appear, That the Father has committed all Judgment to the Son of Man, when he appoints the whole Heavenly Host to attend him, and to be his Ministers in summoning all Mankind to his Bar, and in executing that Sentence that he shall pass upon them. See Matth. xiii. 41. And he shall come in his own Glory, even with all those Rays of Majesty that are darted on his human Nature in its present exalted State, by that Eternal Word that assumed it, and of which he gave some Specimen in his glorious Transfiguration on the Mount, when we read, *That his face shone as the Sun, and his Rayment was white as the Light*, Matth. xvii. 2. And as loud Acclamations are wont to attend the publick and pompous Appearance of earthly Magistrates and Judges, so we are told, *That the Lord shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the Voice of an Archangel, and with the Trump of God, even so loud a Voice as shall awaken and raise the Dead themselves*. See 1 Thess. iv. 16.

I now come,

II. To consider the Wisdom and Reasonableness of this Constitution, that the Man, Christ Jesus, should be ordained the Judge of the World.

'Tis true indeed, that if the Case were such, that we could assign no satisfactory Reason of such a Constitution, it would become us to reverence the sovereignty of God therein, and to believe that he has wise and excellent Ends in it, though we could not discern or find them out. But 'tis far otherwise; and there are such manifest Congruities in his being ordained as the Father's Commissioner in judging the World, as do abundantly discover and display the admirable Wisdom of God therein.

I shall only insist on these;

I. That the Man, Christ Jesus, should be ordained the Judge of the World, does accommodate the Solemnity of that final Judgment, to the weakness of our finite Nature, who are then to be judged.

For since this great Affair is to be openly transacted in the view of all the World, in order to the publick Manifestation of the Justice and Mercy of God, and to the full Conviction of those that are to be judg'd, concerning the Equity of the Sentence passed upon them, upon a full and calm Hearing of the judicial Process; it was no way congruous, that this fi-

nal Judgment should be immediately administered by God himself. For as he himself dwells in inaccessible Light, so should he make any bright Discoveries of his amazing Glory, none could see him and live, Exod. xxxiii. 20. Such an illustrious Presence of his would be unsupportable to his weak Creatures. Whose Eye could bear to behold that dazzling Splendor of the Divine Majesty, before which Angels themselves veil their Faces? Whose Ears could bear to hear that Voice of his, at which the Earth melts, even that thundering Voice, at which the Pillars of Heaven are said to be astonished? Psal. xlv. 6. Job xxvi. 11.

Whereas now, that final Judgment shall be administered by One whom such weak Creatures as we are, may bear to see and hear; by One clothed with our Nature, whom every Eye can behold, before whom all may freely offer their Pleas, and from whom they may with undistracted Minds, receive full and clear Conviction of the Equity of their Doom; nay, by One that by his participation of our Nature, experimentally knows our Infirmities and Temptations, and is therefore both capable and inclin'd to make all merciful Allowance for our involuntary Slips and Failures. And yet by One in whom the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and who is therefore possess'd of all those Divine Perfections, which (as I suggested before) give us the highest Assurance concerning the Righteousness and Impartiality of his Sentence. See Rev. ii. 23.)

And,

2. That the Man, Christ Jesus, should be ordain'd the Judge of the World, is a suitable Reward of his deep Humiliation here on Earth.

'Tis because he that was in the form of God, took on him the form of a Servant, and was made in the likeness of Men, and humbled himself to low as to become obedient to Death, even the (shameful and ignominious as well as painful and accursed) Death of the Cross, that God has now so highly exalted him, as to give him such a supreme Dominion over Angels and Men, and this particular Mark and Branch of it, even Authority to judge the one and the other, Phil. ii. 7, 8, &c. And it was every way congruous to the Wisdom of God, that he who voluntarily stoop'd so low in order to his becoming the Redeemer and Saviour of a lost World, should now be advanced to the Dignity of appearing as the final Judge of it. That as in him the Divine Life appeared here obscur'd and clouded in the lowest Circumstance of his voluntary Self-Abasement, so in him it should appear with all the bright Rays of transcendent Greatness and Glory. None ever did or could condescend so low to promote the Glory of God in the Salvation of Men; and it was a suitable Recompence thereof that he should be exalted so high. Who more fit to judge the Heathen World for their Improvement or Misimprovement of the Light of Nature, than he, to whose Mediation they owe the continuance of it? And who more fit to judge the Christian World for their Acceptance or Rejection of the Gospel-Covenant, than he, who not only came to publish these marvellous offers of Divine Grace, but to purchase the Blessings offered, and that at the costly Expence of his own Blood? Who more fit to judge the fallen Angels themselves, than he, that came to overthrow their usurped Dominion, and to restore the Kingdom of God among Men? And how just a Rebuke is it of their insolent Pride, in endeavouring to usurp the Throne of God, thus to subject them to the Judgment of a Man? How congruous, that he, who upon the Cross became the Scorn and Triumph of Devils and wicked Men, should in his Kingdom appear to the Confusion and Terror of both, as their righteous Judge? How will this glorious and amazing Scene surprize the unbelieving World, when they shall see him whom they have pierced, whom they despised and derided, whose Authority they rejected, and whose Mercy they trampled on, coming in the Clouds of Heaven, in flaming Fire

Fire to execute Vengeance on all that knew not God and obeyed not the Gospel? Rev. i. 7. How will it adorn the Beauty of Divine Providence, by forcing the most inveterate Enemies of our Blessed Redeemer to acknowledge his Dominion, and obliging those to submit to his judicial Authority who rejected his salutary Mercy and Grace?

On both these accounts, the Wisdom of God is illustriously display'd in his judging the World by that Man whom he has ordained.

But this leads me to the

IV. Head contain'd in the Text, viz. That God has given all Men assurance of his judging the World by Jesus Christ, in that he has raised him from the Dead.

And indeed, since this Constitution whereby Jesus Christ is ordained as the Father's Commissioner in judging the World, is an Act of God's sovereign Pleasure, no way discoverable by the Light of Nature, and yet of great Importance to be considered and believed, it was very fit, that some convincing and satisfying Evidence of it should be given to the World. And such a convincing Evidence the Apostle here supposes the Resurrection of our Blessed Saviour to be.

Now, that his Resurrection is such a Proof of God's constituting him the Judge of the World, as ought to convince and satisfy every unprejudiced and considerate Mind, will appear if we duly weigh the following Particulars.

I. The Resurrection of Christ is a convincing Proof of the whole of his Doctrine, and consequently of this important and essential Article thereof.

I have already shewn, that Christ himself declared, That the Father had committed all Judgment to him, and given him Authority to execute it, because he was the Son of Man, John v. 22, 26. And 'tis on the account of all Power in Heaven and Earth being committed to him, that he commissioned his Apostles to go and Disciple all Nations, Matth. xxviii. 18, &c. And the Apostles accordingly declare, that he had given them this as one eminent Part of their Instructions, To Preach and Testify, that he is ordained of God, to be the Judge of the Quick and Dead. Now, our Blessed Saviour, during his personal Ministry, frequently foretold his own Resurrection, and that on the third Day, and refers us to it as the demonstrative Proof of his Divine Authority and Mission, and of the Truth of the Doctrine he taught. See Matth. xii. 39, 40. Inasmuch that his inveterate Enemies were alarmed thereby, and accordingly used the utmost Precaution to prevent it, by setting a strict Guard upon his Sepulchre, Matth. xxvii. 63, &c. Now, in these Circumstances what clearer and fuller Attestation could the great God give of the Truth of his Doctrine, than by thus eminently fulfilling his own Predictions, and employing his Almighty Power to raise him from the Dead? Because otherwise, we must suppose a God of infinite Wisdom and Truth and Holiness, to give the greatest Countenance and Credit imaginable to a vile Impostor, and to put Mankind under the strongest Temptation possible to believe a Delusion and Lye. But this we are sure is utterly inconsistent with these adorable Perfections of his Nature. His Resurrection therefore is as ample an Attestation to the Truth of his Gospel in general, and consequently of this main Article of it, as we can well suppose it reasonable for God to give, or for us to expect.

Especially if we add,

2. That the Resurrection of Christ was the first Step towards the Administration of that mediatorial Kingdom, of which his judging the World is to be the last and conclusive Act.

Accordingly we may observe, that the Apostle Peter speaking to the Jews, justly infers from God's having raised the blessed Jesus from the Dead, that he had made him both Lord and Christ, and appointed him (according to the ancient Prophecies concerning him) to sit upon the Throne of David. See Acts ii. from

32 to 37. See also Acts v. 31. Acts x. 40, 41. Acts xiii. 32, 33, 34. &c.

His Resurrection was the first Step of his Exaltation. It appeared thereby, that all Power in Heaven and Earth was committed to him; and he then entred upon the full and open Exercise of his Royal Authority, and will continue the Exercise of it, till he has by the final Reward of his faithful Servants, and Punishment of his incorrigible Enemies, attained all the Ends of his mediatorial Kingdom, which he shall then, and not till then, give up to the Father. See Cor. i. 15, 24, &c. Who more fit to judge the World, than he, that has the Keys of [the] unseen State, (or the invisible World) and of Death? (the Passage into it) Rev. i. 18.

3. His Resurrection is a Pledge and Security of our Resurrection in order to the final Judgment.

There is a Day, or Time appointed, in which God will judge the World in Righteousness, by this Man whom he hath ordained. This Day, or Time commences at the general Resurrection. We must arise in order to our coming to Judgment, and there receiving according to things done in the Body, whether good or evil. The Sea, and Death, and Hell, must give up the Dead that are in them, that all may be judged according to their Works, Rev. xx. 13. Now, the Resurrection of our Lord Jesus, not only demonstrates the possibility of ours, but is design'd as a publick Security and Pledge of it. 'Tis a Confirmation of that great Truth, that as in Adam all dye, so in Christ shall all be made alive. And that as by one Man, Death came, so by Man came also the Resurrection from the Dead, 1 Cor. xv. 21, 22. And the Apostle reckons this Argument so strong, as to wonder how any could doubt of the reasonableness of this Inference from our Lord's Resurrection. If Christ arose from the Dead, how say some among you, that there is no Resurrection from the Dead? v. 12. And he elsewhere instructs us to argue from our Lord's Resurrection to our own, if we believe (saith he) that Jesus died, and rose again, even so also them that sleep in Jesus, will God bring with him, 1 Thes. iv. 14.

So that God's raising him from the Dead is a full Proof, not only, That he will judge the World by him, but that there is a Day, or Time appointed for it; That there shall be a general Resurrection of the Dead in order to it.

I now come to the

V. And last Head, viz. That the Consideration of that future Judgment, is a powerful Argument to excite all Men to serious Repentance.

But of that I shall treat at large, as the main Branch of the Application, to which I now address my self.

Will God judge the World in Righteousness by Jesus Christ, as his Commissioner; Is there a Day and Time appointed for it; And have we such Assurance and Proof of the Certainty hereof? Then;

I. We may see, how unreasonable all our Objections against Divine Providence from the present Administrations of it are.

II. We may hence infer, how much this great Event, should command our most serious and attentive Thoughts.

1. Partly, because 'tis an Affair of the most glorious and awful Solemnity in it self.

2. Partly, because we are in particular infinitely concerned in the important Issues thereof. And I now add,

3. Because our attentive and frequent Fore-thoughts of it are necessary to quicken us to an effectual Preparation for it.

This glorious Event being yet future; This important Transaction being reserved to another State and Life that now appears at a great distance from us; It can never make any deep and lasting Impression upon our Minds, unless by Meditation and Faith we often present it to our View. Those distant and invisible

invisible Objects will no farther affect our Hearts and influence our Lives, than they are realized to us by believing Contemplation. 'Tis the frequent Forethoughts of our final Audit that must prompt us to act as becomes accountable Creatures. 'Tis such serious Thoughts that must excite us to set him continually before our Eyes, as the *All-seeing Witness* of our Actions, before whom we foresee that we must appear as the *impartial Judge* of them. 'Tis such Thoughts as these that must deter us from doing any thing now, that we shall be ashamed or afraid to hear of again at the great Day of Accounts; and must quicken us to be *holy in all manner of Conversation*, that we may be found of Christ in peace, without spot or blame at his final Appearance or Coming, 2 Pet. iii. 16, &c. In a word, 'tis such Thoughts as these that must induce us so to demean our selves in this State of Probation and Trial, as may render the Expectation of a future Judgment, and a State of final Retribution, sweet and comfortable. The more we think of it, the more we shall see the absolute Necessity, and the great Wisdom of preparing it.

But,

III. We may hence infer, how inexcusable our Unbelief or wilful Inconsideration of this future Judgment is.

I. Our Dis-belief of it is inexcusable.

I have already shewn, what solid and convincing Evidence even the *Light of Nature* gives us concerning a future Judgment in general, and what clear additional Proof the Gospel gives us concerning the particular Process of it, and the manner in which that great Affair shall be transacted by the Son of Man as the Father's Commissioner. And what reasonable Plea can we have for our Unbelief after such a satisfying Assurance of the Truth and Certainty of this important Event?

'Tis no just Objection against it, that God's final Rewards and Punishments are not dispensed in this Life. For I have already shewn, that this would be no way suitable to our present State of Probation and Trial. The Glory of our Obedience would be obscured, if we should act by Sight instead of acting by Faith; and the fearful Examples of Divine Justice flaming out against impenitent Sinners every where round about us, would render this an undesirable Place and Scene for good Men to be happy in.

Nor is it any reasonable Argument against this future Judgment, that 'tis so long delayed, even to the End of the World, to the Time of the general Resurrection.

I know indeed, there are many profane Scoffers that are ready to deride our Expectation of such a Judgment to come, by making the long Delay an Argument against the reality of it. And the Apostle Peter has very exactly given us the Sum of their Reasoning on this Head: *Where, say they, is the Promise of his Coming? For since the Fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the Creation*, 2 Pet. iii. 4. And thus, because Divine Vengeance is not speedily executed upon an ungodly World, the Hearts of such wretched Infidels are the more fully set in them to do evil, Eccles. viii. 11.

But such unbelieving Scoffers should consider, that nothing can be more unreasonable than to conclude against this final Administration of Divine Justice, from the long-continued Exercise of God's Forbearance and Patience. They may indeed infer from it, That God is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance, 2 Pet. iii. 9. But they can by no means reasonably infer, that because an infinitely gracious God bears long, that he will bear always with, and never avenge their profane Contempt of his Authority and Laws. There are other succeeding Generations to act their part on the Stage of this Earth, before the Scene of Time be shut up by this conclusive Act of Divine Providence. And the great God is not like us, hasty and

impatient to avenge the Provocations that Sinners offer to him. He, whose admirable Patience often extends so long towards particular Nations, before he proceed to an utter Excision of them, (as in the case of the Jewish Nation) may be much more supposed willing to protract the Exercise of it towards Mankind in general, before he bring on that terrible Day of Judgment, and utter Perdition of ungodly Men. And the fit Time for so important an Event will not seem long to him, as it may to us, since to him one Day is as a thousand Years, and a thousand Years as one Day, 2 Pet. iii. 8. So that we are unfit to measure the length of Divine Forbearance by our impatient Expectations.

Besides, such Reasons as render the long Delay of human Justice highly inexpedient, have no place in the Divine Government; and therefore the meer Delay is no reasonable Objection against the Certainty of it.

'Tis often dangerous to delay the Execution of Justice among Men; because Witnesses may die, or Enemies be lost, or the Criminals themselves may by Flight, or at least by Death, escape out of the hands of publick Justice. But none of these Inconveniencies can attend the Delay of Divine Justice. To his All-comprehending Eye, all the past Actions of Men, even of all that have lived in the Generations that are past, are as obvious and open as their present. They will all appear written down in those unerring Records of Divine Omniscience, and of every Man's own Conscience. So that no distance of Time can blot them out of the Book of his Remembrance, or render the Evidence of Matters of Fact obscure to him. And Death is so far from putting any beyond the reach of Divine Justice, that then that particular Judgment begins that is preparatory for the final and general Judgment. By Death, the Souls of Men enter into the Mansions of Light, or Regions of Darknes, in which they have the joyful or terrible Expectation of this great Day of the Lord, and are already unspeakably happy or miserable, according to the different Prospect they have of the important and eternal Issues thereof. There is, as to the dislodged Souls of Men, a Life of Retribution that immediately succeeds this, though the Resurrection of the Body, and the consummate Happiness or Misery of our compounded Nature be deferred and reserved to the End of Time.

Nay, I may here add, That we should be so far from being drawn to doubt of that future Judgment, because the delay of it tempts others to dis-believe it, that the progress of such Infidelity should be to us the surest Prognostick that that terrible Day is hastning towards a secure and ungodly World. 'Tis by the Belief of such a future Judgment, that God now governs the World. And while the Faith of it is so general, and so far prevails among Men, as to keep up the Interest and Life of serious Religion in a considerable part of Mankind, a gracious God may for their sakes spare the rest, and adjourn the final Perdition of a sinful World. But if this Faith begin notoriously to fail from among the Sons of Men; if Infidelity spread even among those that enjoy the Light of Divine Revelation; if such Scoffers multiply as mock at the Threatnings of a Judgment to come, at which they should tremble; if the generality, even of the Christian World, sink into such a fearless Security and Contempt of Divine Vengeance, as the Old World did before the Flood, then may we expect that this Day of the Lord will come as a Thief in the Night, with a sudden but terrible Surprise. When Men will no longer be governed by Faith, 'tis high time that God should appear and rule them by Sight. When few or none will believe the vindictive Justice of God, 'tis fit that he should appear to make them feel it. It may well be expected that the great God will come to judge the World, when the most begin to doubt whether he made or does govern it.

But,

But, 2. For such as pretend to believe a future Judgment, and yet live in wretched Forgetfulness of it, and Unconcernedness about it, their wilful Inconsideration is, if possible, more inexcusable. We read of One that being required to give an account of the publick Treasure, committed to him by one of the Grecian Republicks, and being at an utter loss how to make up the Account, and under great perplexity about it, was advised by his Friend, to try rather by making Interest among the Citizens to prevent his being obliged to give any Account at all. And if such a Method were practicable in the case of ungodly Sinners, there were something to be alledged for their stupid Neglect of a Judgment to come. If indeed we could prevent the Approach of that awful Day, by banishing the Thoughts of it, or if our Lord would delay his Coming, because we delay our Preparation for it; Sinners might have some pretence for putting that evil Day far from them. But if that final Judgment will come whether we think of it or no; if we must shortly be summoned to it, whether prepared or unprepared; 'tis the height of Folly and Distraction to live from Day to Day in a wretched Unthoughtfulness of it. 'Tis impossible we should be duly prepared for it, if we seldom or never entertain any serious Thoughts of it. Those that think oftneft of it, find all their Consideration no more than needful to excite their Diligence in providing for it. So that a stupid Security is a certain Evidence of an Unprepared Soul. Nay, 'tis justly to be feared, that the most therefore cast off the Thoughts of a future Judgment, because they are secretly conscious to themselves that they are wofully unprepared for it; and are therefore loth, by

thinking of it, to disturb their present carnal Security and Peace. But to such I would suggest, if it be so uneasy and terrifying to think of thy future Account, how much more terrifying will it be to be called to it, while thou art utterly Unready for it? If thou canst not now bear the Thoughts of thy final and righteous Judge, how wilt thou bear to see him; nay, to hear his condemning Sentence, and to fall into his avenging Hand? The serious, though uneasy, Thoughts of this may possibly, nay, very probably, will prevent this doleful Issue, by exciting thee to that effectual Preparation for a future Judgment, that may render those Thoughts of it pleasing and comfortable which are now so affrightful and unwelcome.

And were it not infinitely better, by such Thoughts, so to quicken your Preparations for that future Judgment, that it may be no more Matter of Terror and Dread, but of joyful Expectation; than to sleep in wilful Security and Forgetfulness till that final Judgment surprize you unprepared, till that terrible Day come upon you unawares, as a Thief in the Night; so that you never discern your Danger till there is no Hope or Possibility of preventing it. It will then be too late to cry out, O that I had foreseen and forethought of this! O consider then, that Preparation for this future Judgment is the most important Business of Life; for as Death leaves us, (in the same Temper and Frame, in the same State and Condition) Judgment will certainly find us. For 'tis appointed to all Men once to die, and after Death the Judgment, Heb. ix. 27.

Other Uses I must refer to another Discourse on these Words.

S E R M O N X.

On the Certainty of a Future Judgment.

xvii Acts 30, 31.

30 And the Times of this Ignorance GOD winked at, but now commandeth all Men every where to repent.

31 Because he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, by that Man whom he hath ordained, whereof he hath given Assurance to all Men, in that he hath raised him from the Dead.



HAVE already gone through the several Heads of Doctrine contained in the Words, viz.

I. That God will judge the World in Righteousness.

II. That there is a Day, or Time appointed for that End.

III. That he will judge the World by that Man, whom he hath ordained, viz. by Jesus Christ, as his Commissioner.

IV. That he hath given this Assurance hereof to all Men, That he hath raised him from the Dead.

I then entered on the Application of the Subject in these several Branches of it.

And,

I. This should silence all our Objections against the present Conduct and Administrations of Divine Providence.

II. This future Judgment should command our most serious and attentive Thoughts.

'Tis a Matter of the greatest Solemnity in it self, and of the greatest Importance and Concern to every one of us, and our frequent Forethoughts of it highly needful to quicken our Preparation for it.

III. We may hence see, that Mens wilful Disbelief or Inconsideration of it are most inexcusable.

IV. I would propose this future Judgment to the Consideration of all ungodly Sinners, as a powerful *Motive to serious Repentance.*

And 'tis chiefly for this purpose that the Apostle here preaches this Doctrine of God's judging the World by Jesus Christ, to his Gentile Hearers. That God (saith he) who winked at (or, overlooked) the former Times of Ignorance, now commands all Men every where to repent, because he hath appointed a Day in which he will judge the World, &c.

Now, that the Consideration of God's judging the World by Jesus Christ, is a very proper Argument to call and excite Men to Repentance, will appear, if we consider the following Particulars.

i. This Consideration of God's judging the World in Righteousness by Jesus Christ, shews us the absolute Necessity of a sincere Repentance to prevent our terrible Condemnation to everlasting Punishment.

And this will fully appear if we consider the following Particulars.

If God judge the World in Righteousness, we are sure that no Sins of ours, how secret soever, can escape the Notice of his All-seeing Eye. And we that are conscious to our selves of so innumerable Deviations from the holy Law of God, and many of them attended with so hainous Aggravations, that might justly expose us to his righteous Severity, cannot doubt but the righteous Judge of all the Earth might find Guilt enough in us to justify his condemning Sentence. Even the case of the best of Men were hopeless and desperate, if an omniscient and infinitely holy God should be strict to mark their Iniquities, and should enter into (severe and unallayed) Judgment with them, cxx Psal. 3. cxlii Psal. 3. What then must the dismal case of those be, whose whole Life has been a continued Defection from God, and an obstinate Course of wilful Disobedience to his known Commands? Such can never plead not guilty to the long and dreadful Indictment that the Justice of God will draw up against them, and can produce no tolerable Plea why the Sentence of his violated Law should not take place, and be for ever excuted upon them.

Again, If God will judge the World in Righteousness, and has appointed a Day, or Time for that End, then no present Impunity of Sinners can be any Security against their final Condemnation and Punishment.

Ungodly Sinners are very prone to misinterpret the present Forbearance of God, and to draw Encouragement from it to presume on their final Impunity; because he now keeps silence, and suffers them to go on with an undisturbed Prosperity in their sinful Course, without ever alarming them with terrible Judgments, because Vengeance does not immediately follow their most hainous Provocations at the heels, and Divine Justice seems to sleep; they presently conclude, That God is altogether such a one as themselves, i Psal. 21. i. e. that he makes as light a matter of Sin as they do, and is far from any such Resentment of their Violations of his Law as the Threatnings of it would import. But this perverse Inference from his present Silence and Long-suffering is most unreasonable and inexcusable, when Men are so plainly foretold, That there is a Day appointed in which God will judge the World in Righteousness; and that as to particular Persons, the Manifestation of Divine Justice in the punishment of their Sins is chiefly reserved to that great and terrible Day. For if this be true, every obstinate Sinner has all possible ground to believe, That if the present Riches of Divine Goodness and Forbearance do not lead him to Repentance, he is but, after his hard and impenitent heart, treasuring up Wrath against the Day of Wrath, and against the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, ii Rom. 4, 5. Nay, he has all imaginable ground to conclude, that the more he abuses the sparing and forbearing Mercy of God, the more he will feel the Severity of his future Vengeance; and that the slower that Vengeance is in coming, its Stroke will be the

heavier and more unsupportable. Even the Heathens themselves had such Apprehensions of this Matter. *Ὁ δὲ θεὸς ἀλεῖσι μοῖαι ἀλεῖσι δ' ἐλεπταί.* See also *Plutarch De Sera Numinis Vindicta.*—Let no impenitent Sinner then be so foolish and unreasonable as to draw any favourable Conclusion concerning the final Issue of his sinful Life from the present uninterrupted Prosperity of it. This is the Day of God's Forbearance and Grace, that will be succeeded by a Day of terrible Vengeance on all the wretched Despisers of it. So that their present Impunity is but a Reservation of them to be the more remarkable Monuments of his just Severity for ever.

Again, if God will judge the World in Righteousness by Jesus Christ, then we are sure, that no short of sincere Repentance can prevent our final Condemnation.

For though our Blessed Saviour has brought us the clearest Declarations and fullest Assurance of pardoning Mercy, yet the Offers of it are made to none but believing Penitents. And all obdurate Sinners are by the most peremptory Threatnings excluded from it, and exposed to the severest Punishment. Every Man has Guilt enough to render him obnoxious to the Justice of God, if pardoning Mercy interpose not, to cancel his guilty Score, and to blot his Iniquities out of the Book of God's Remembrance. Nothing but the atoning Blood of Christ (the great Propitiation for Sin) can wash away our Guilt; but that precious Blood was never shed to protect obstinate Sinners from the Pursuit of Divine Justice. All such impenitent Despisers of the Authority of God are debarred from any Interest in the propitiatory Vertue of it. 'Tis the Blood of the New and Everlasting Covenant; and those only will be found under the Shelter and Protection of it, who consent to the gracious Terms thereof, and who by Jesus Christ, as their Mediator, sincerely return to their offended but reconcilable God and Father. For all that refuse to come under the Bonds of that blessed Covenant, the Blood of this great Surety of it can never be sprinkled on them. Nay, instead of speaking better things to them than the blood of Abel; it will rather like his, cry loud to Heaven against them, not for Impunity, but for that Vengeance that is due to them as the Rejecters of God's offered Grace and Salvation. Nay, such impenitent Sinners under the Gospel are not only excluded from pardoning Mercy, and left under that Sentence that the Law of Works passes upon all Transgressors, but they are exposed to a more aggravated Punishment, and to a more insupportable degree of future Misery. O how dreadful then is the case of every obdurate ungodly Sinner, while he continues such! He is in effect condemned already, and has the Wrath of God abiding on him, iii John 36. The Sentence of God's holy Law (that has made Death the Wages of Sin) stands in full force against him. And if by final Impenitency he reject the Offers of Pardon and Indemnity, he will have no Mediator to interpose as an Advocate or Intercessor to offended Justice for him; he will have no available Plea for Forgiveness and Mercy to offer. Nay, he must be judged by that Blessed Saviour, whose Offers of Mercy he has trampled on, whose Calls to Repentance he has turned a deaf Ear to; to whose Spirit of Grace he has offered so great an Affront, by resisting and quenching his Motions; and who is therefore highly concerned to vindicate his own as well as his Father's Honour, by severely avenging on such, not only their Contempt of God's Authority, but of his Grace too; by punishing their Disobedience to his Law, as extremely aggravated by their slighting his compassionate Proposals of Reconciliation and Peace. And, O how strong will the Cries of injured Mercy be for terrible Vengeance against such as have offered such unsufferable Indignities and Affronts to it! How dismal will it be to impenitent Sinners to find him that in vain offered to become their

their merciful Saviour, appear as their now inexorable Judge! How will it fill them with Consternation and Despair to see him who came before as the Ambassador of Divine Mercy, with Proposals of Peace, to come now as the Commissioner of his Justice, in flaming Fire to execute Vengeance on all that knew not God, nor obeyed his Gospel, and to punish them with everlasting Destruction from the Presence of the Lord and from the Glory of his Power! And it will sure add a peculiar but terrible Accent to the condemning Sentence passed upon such impenitent Sinners, that it will be pronounced by his Mouth, who was once the Herald of Divine Grace, and in vain published to them the most merciful Tenders of it, that ever an offended Majesty made to the guilty Sons of Men. And therefore the Apostle John seems to make a particular Remark on this, when he tells us, *Behold he comes in the Clouds, and every Eye shall behold him, even those that have pierced him, and all Tribes of the Earth shall wail because of him, i Rev. 7.* Not only will those Unbelieving Jews behold him with Terror and Confusion, who were the immediate Instruments of his bitter and reproachful Sufferings, when they shall see him whom they crucified as a Malefactor; appear as their final Judge; but all those impenitent Sinners of the Gentiles, who have in effect crucified him afresh by their wilful disbelief of his Gospel, or disobedience to it, even they, the greatest and the proudest of them, will then in vain seek to hide themselves in the Dens and the Rocks of the Mountains; they will in vain call to the Rocks and the Mountains; saying, *Fall upon us and hide us from the Face of him that sits upon the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb, because the great Day of his Wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand? vi Rev. 15, 16, 17.* The Lamb of God, when incensed by the final Impenitency of Sinners, will then appear as a roaring Lion. And those that would not bow to his Sceptre of Peace, shall then be crush'd by his Iron Rod. How seasonable then is the Psalmist's Advice, *Kiss the Son of God (by a reverential Subjection to his Authority) lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way; for if his Anger be kindled never so little, blessed are all they that put their Trust in him; but much more will such appear to be blessed, who have put their Trust in him, when that great Day of his Wrath shall come, before which none can ever stand, whom their final Impenitency exposes to it.*

And, O that these Considerations may convince every ungodly Sinner among us of the Necessity of Repentance, to prevent the terrible Issues of this final Judgment! May every such Sinner learn hence to argue and plead with himself; "How shall I stand at the Bar of my righteous Judge under such a vast load of unpardoned Guilt! With what hope of Mercy can I appear before that God, whose Laws I have cast behind my back, and whose Offers of Pardon and Salvation I have undervalued and slighted! How shall I look that Blessed Saviour in the Face, whose compassionate Mediation I have despised; whose merciful Invitations to return to an offended God by him, I have refused to comply with; whose rightful Authority I have trampled on; whose gracious Attempts for my Recovery and Salvation I have resisted and defeated; whose precious Blood I have offered the highest Indignity to, by refusing that Pardon that was the Purchase thereof, when tendred on the most reasonable and condescending Terms! So that if my timely Repentance and believing Application to the Mercy of God by him prevent not, my case is hopeless and desperate for ever. I must then renounce my Sins if ever I would prevent this terrible Condemnation for them. I must return to God as my reconcileable Father, or else I shall fall into his hands as my avenging Judge. I must hear the calm Voice of the Son of God calling me to repent and believe the Gospel, that I may

not hear from him that terrible Doom, Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels. See *xxv Matth. 41.*

But farther,

2. This Consideration of God's judging the World in Righteousness by Jesus Christ, as it shews us the absolute Necessity of Repentance, so it presents to us the greatest Encouragement to it.

For if God will judge the World by Jesus Christ, then his Gospel will be to all that hear it the Rule of his final Judgment. Now, in that Gospel, Repentance and Remission of Sins are to be preached to all Nations in the Name of Christ. 'Tis the Tenor of his Gospel, Repent and be converted that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord, in *Acts 19.* The Gospel is God's Royal Act of Pardon and Indemnity published to all the truly Penitent. Therein, through Christ, is preached unto us Forgiveness of Sins, and through him all that believe are justified (or acquitted and absolved) from all things from which they could not be justified by the Law of Moses, *xiii Acts 38, 39.*

And, O how wonderful an Incitement is this to serious Repentance to all, who, upon the review of their past sinful Life, cannot but behold innumerable Offences that render them obnoxious to the Vengeance of God, according to the strict Tenor of his Law; I say, how powerful an Encouragement is it to such to consider, that they shall be judged by Jesus Christ, and therefore not by the Tenor of the Law of Works that denounces a Curse to all that continue not in all things written in the Book of the Law to do them; but according to the Law of Faith or Law of Grace that contains such free Promises of Justification and Pardon to all believing Penitents. For then, upon our sincere Repentance, all the Guilt of our unregenerate State and Life shall be entirely blotted out; all our past Iniquities shall be covered and hid, and shall be imputed to us no more. Sincere Repentance shall (as the Condition on our part) put us into the State and Condition of Righteous or Innocent Persons, (i. e. with respect to our real Right to Impunity and Life.) None of our past Transgressions that have been sincerely repented of shall be charged upon us to our final Condemnation. Our most heinous Guilt shall be washed away in the Redeemer's Blood. A gracious God will remember them no more. He will cast them behind his back, and cast them into the depths of the Sea, *vii Micha 19.* He will remove them as far from us as the East is from the West, *ciii Psal. 12.* By such Expressions as these he declares the Fulness as well as Freeness of his pardoning Mercy to the truly Penitent. And, O how reviving are the Apprehensions of so entire and plenary a Forgiveness to a Soul that entertains serious Thoughts of the righteous Judgment of God! And what abundant Encouragement have we to return to him, when we are assured that upon our thus penitently judging and condemning ourselves, we shall not be severely judged and condemned by him! For that Gospel of his Son shall be the Rule of his final Judgment that pronounces an entire Absolution to all the truly Penitent, and reverses that condemning Sentence which the Law of Works had passed upon us. So that under the Gospel, 'tis not the greatness of our Sins, but our Obduracy and wilful Continuance in them that is the insuperable bar to our Justification here and our final Acquittal at the Bar of Christ. 'Tis final Unbelief and Impenitency aggravating our other Sins, that will subject us to inexorable Vengeance. And how much soever our other Offences may have deserved the Severity of Divine Justice, a timely Repentance and sincere Conversion to God will certainly prevent that dismal Issue. If the Wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and turn to the Lord, he will have Mercy on him, and to our God, he will abundantly pardon him, *lv Isa. 7.* And who that is conscious of his being liable to Eternal Condemnation, would

not

not readily submit to so reasonable and gracious Terms for the prevention of it! Who would not penitently lament and renounce his Sins now, that foresees he shall hereby be secured from that endless Punishment which is the due Desert of them! Who would not return to an offended God, and to a dutiful Subjection to his rightful Authority, that considers him as a *compassionate Father*, ready to receive and embrace *returning Prodigals*! Who would not engage in his Service, who is so willing to forget and cancel our past Offences, and to accept and reward our sincere though imperfect and defective Obedience for the future!

V. If God has appointed a Day in which he will judge the World in Righteousness, &c. then let us learn all to live as becomes accountable Creatures.

Nothing can be more unreasonable and inexcusable, than for those to be regardless of their moral Actions, who know and foresee that they shall be judged for them. Sure the serious and firm Belief of that final Account should be a perpetual Awe upon our Minds, and a powerful *Restraint from every known Sin, and Incitement to every known Duty*.

It should be a powerful *Restraint from every known Sin*.

Who would wittingly do that now which he will blush and tremble to hear of again at the Bar of God! Who would dare to allow himself in that which he foreknows that his righteous Judge will censure and condemn! And if this Consideration were set home upon our Consciences, it would be a powerful Preservative, not only against those Sins, which fall under the Cognizance and View, and would expose us to the Reproaches and Censures of our Fellow-Creatures; but even against those which no other Eye but that of God beholds, and no other Judge has a right to Punish but he. The Belief of his final Judgment should as effectually check all the *sinful Motions* of our Souls, as all our wicked *Words or Works*. It should make us afraid of a *proud and self-exalted Thought*, of an *envious Eye*, of a *revengeful Disposition*, of an *unclean Desire*, of a *covetous Wish*, of a *sinful Intention and Purpose*, though it never proceed to Execution. It should as effectually withhold us from the most *secret Sins* (from the consideration of the Eye of our great Judge being perpetually upon us) as if a thousand Witnesses stood and looked on. All Temptations to Sin from the advantage of Secrecy in the Commission of it, would then entirely lose their Force. That God *sets our most secret Sins in the Light of his Countenance*, should be as powerful an Antidote against the strongest Solicitation to them, as if they were exposed to the View of the whole World. For so they will be when he *brings every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be Good or Evil*. Nay, his Eye alone should strike us with a far greater Awe, since we are infinitely more concerned in his Judgment, than in that of all the World.

And among all other Sins, the Belief of that righteous Judgment, should especially preserve us from that odious one of *Hypocrisy*. Who would dare in his solemn Transactions with God, to *lie to him with his Lips, and flatter him with his Mouth*; who would act a feigned Part in Religion, and take up a formal Profession and lifeless Show of it, when he foresees how effectually that omniscient and righteous Judge will pull off his Mask and Disguise, and to his eternal Confusion, expose his odious Dissimulation, to the view and abhorrence of Angels and Men! And the same may be said in reference to all *Deceit and Falshood in our Dealings with Men*. How little Temptation should it be thereto, that we can manage our fraudulent Designs so as to escape the Notice and Discovery of Men, when we cannot conceal them from the Observation of an all-knowing and righteous Judge, who will *bring these hidden Works of Darkness to Light*!

And the Consideration of this righteous Judgment of God should be no less powerful *Incitement to every known Duty*. Who would not be fired with an holy Ambition to approve himself to the Eye of his omniscient Judge? Who would not be found doing that which he will *approve and reward*? Nay, who would not abound in *every good Word and Work*, that foresees it will be *fruit redounding to his Honour and Comfort in the great Day of Accounts*! Who would not use his Talents with that Fidelity and Diligence that may obtain the *Euge and Applause* of his great Lord and Master, *Well done good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*! *Matth. xxv*. Who would baulk and decline any Duty for the *Difficulty or Danger*, or *Self-denial* 'tis attended with, that believes that he does behold and will liberally reward it! And, this Consideration should prompt us to those *secret Duties* of Religion, which no other Eye beholds but that of God. It should make us as constant and assiduous in our *Closet-Devotions*, as in the Exercises of *Publick Worship*. We shall then account it Encouragement enough to pray and fast in Secret, that *he who sees in secret, will openly reward us*, *Matth. vi. 6, 18*. We should then be as studious of inward *Purity of Heart*, as of external *Holiness of Conversation*, and be as careful to regulate our *inward Thoughts and Desires*, as to govern our *Tongues and Actions*. We should in a word, be industrious to approve our selves to the Eye of our great Judge, that the Thoughts of his final Appearance may not be to us Matter of *Terror and Dread*, but of *Comfort and Joy*.

VI. If God will judge the World, &c. let us then often judge our selves.

He that daily calls himself to an account now, is most likely to be happily prepared for his final Audit. 'Tis not in vain that God has set up such a Tribunal in our own Consciences, as preparatory to his. Let Conscience be then kept in the due Exercise of its judicial Power, as God's Deputy in our own Breasts. Let Conscience daily review our Actions, to discern and discover, whether they are such as God will approve or dislike. That if they are such as God will approve, we may reap inward Peace and Satisfaction in the review of them: But if they be such as he disallows, we may by a penitent Confession and Amendment, and renewed Application to his pardoning Mercy, prevent their coming into Judgment, to our Confusion and Condemnation. There is no other way but this to get them *blotted out of God's Book*, and to hinder their appearing upon Record against us there.

Nay, let us often review our Actions as they are Evidences of our being in a justified or condemnable State. Let us often compare our selves with the Gospel, as the Rule of God's final Judgment, to see whether we are among those believing and penitent, and sincerely obedient Souls, whom God justifies here according to the Tenor of his gracious Covenant, and will finally acquit; or, among those unbelieving and impenitent, and disobedient Sinners, against whom *his Wrath is revealed from Heaven*, both in the *Threatnings of the Law*, and in *those of the Gospel* it self. It highly concerns us often, to consider in what posture we are, in reference to that final Judgment, whether prepared or unprepared for it, and what Issues of it we have reason from the Tenor of the Gospel to expect. If we are *baptizedly prepared*, it were great pity we should not know it, that the consciousness thereof might excite us to *love and long for the blessed Appearance of our Lord*, and to look forwards towards it with joyful Expectation. If we are unprepared, nothing is more necessary than that we should be awaken'd out of that fatal Security that would expose us to inevitable Ruin, and should see our extreme Danger before it be too late to prevent it.

Did we thus daily judge our selves, we should take the most effectual course to quicken our own Preparations for the Judgment of God, and consequently to secure our selves from his final Condemnation.

VII. If God will judge the World in Righteousness by Jesus Christ, &c. then this administers Matter of Consolation and Joy to all that believe and obey the Gospel of our Lord Jesus.

That God will judge the World by Jesus Christ, gives to all such a comfortable Prospect of the happy Issue of that final Judgment, in reference to their own Eternal State.

Before whom should a sincere Christian think with greater Comfort of appearing, as his final Judge, than before that Blessed Jesus, whom he has unfeignedly accepted and trusted as his offered Saviour, and loved and served as his rightful Lord! Were it left to our own choice, into whose hands that final Judgment should be committed, we could choose none in whom we could find greater Encouragement to our Hopes, and greater Relief against all our anxious Fears.

What, though we are conscious of manifold Offences that might justly expose us to the condemning Sentence of God, should he proceed against us according to the rigour of his unallayed Justice: How effectual a Relief is it to consider, That all our repented Sins are washed away in the Blood of Christ, and cancelled out of the Book of God, and his gracious Covenant has given us entire Absolution from them! And we are sure that our Blessed Saviour will never condemn those whom his atoning Blood has cleansed, and his gracious Covenant has pardoned and justified.

What, though we are conscious of manifold Defects and Failures, and Intermixions in our best Obedience, we have this Encouragement, That if we can approve our Sincerity to his Eye, he that now intercedes for the Acceptance of our sincere Services, will not then reject them, nor deny us that liberal Reward of Grace that he has by his sinless Obedience merited for us, and by his gracious Promises entitled us to.

In a word, we may expect from him, as a righteous Judge, all he has purchased for us as a merciful Redeemer, and promised to us as a bountiful Lord and Master. We may humbly look for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to Eternal Life, Epist. Jude 21.

VIII. That God will judge the World, should make us cautious of passing a rash and uncharitable Judgment on others.

Judge not (saith our Blessed Saviour) *that ye be not judged. For with what Judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, &c. Matth. vii. 1, 2.* Thus the Apostle cautions those that entertain different Sentiments in reference to the Observation of Days, and Distinction of Meats, against Despising and Judging one another on those accounts; *Who art thou that judgest another Man's Servant? To his own Master he stands or falls, v. 4. Why dost thou judge thy Brother, or set at nought thy Brother? For we shall all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ. And again, at v. 12, 13. Every one of us shall give an account of himself to God; Let us not therefore judge one another any more. Especially, we should beware of pretending to censure the Intentions and Thoughts of others, any farther than their Words and Actions give a convincing Discovery of them, because this is to step into the Throne of Christ, and usurp his Prerogative, as the great Searcher of Hearts.*

IX. And that God will judge the World in Righteousness, &c. may be a solid Relief to us against the unjust Judgment of Men.

Sometimes in our temporal Affairs, we may suffer irreparable Wrong in our Reputation, or our worldly Interest, from the unrighteous Judgment of Men. And 'tis in this case some Relief to the Injured and Oppressed, that though they can find no such thing as Justice in earthly Courts of Judicature, yet they may appeal to a superior and impartial Tribunal, and say as David under the unjust Persecution of Saul, *The Lord be judge between thee and me, 1 Sam. xxiv. 12.* And therefore when the Preacher tells us, *He saw under the Sun the Place of Judgment, that Wickedness was there; and the Place of Righteousness, that Iniquity was there: He relieves his troubled Mind with this Consideration, I said in mine heart, God shall judge the Righteous and the Wicked, Ecclef. iii. 16, 17.* The Cause of oppressed Innocence and injured Right will then have a Rehearing, and every unrighteous Judgment be repealed.

Sometimes in the Concerns of Religion, we may be most unjustly reproached and censured, nay, condemned and punished by the unrighteous Sentence of Men.

Divine Truth often passes in the Judgment of erroneous and corrupt Judges for pernicious and damnable Heresy. A necessary Separation from the Errors or Superstitions of a prevailing imposing Party, passes for heinous Schism. Our Obedience to our Laws of God is often arraigned as a criminal Disobedience to the Laws of Men. And we may in such cases be great Sufferers by the unrighteous Sentence of prejudiced Men, whose Judgments are byassed by Ignorance, Prepossession, Malignity, or worldly Interest. And under such Circumstances, it should be a great Relief to us, that all these Matters will have a second and more impartial Hearing at a righteous and impartial Bar. And 'tis no way inconsistent with Divine Charity, and the forgiving our Enemies themselves (as to private Revenge) to derive some Relief from the Forethoughts thereof. *The Elect of God are represented as crying to him Day and Night to avenge (or, vindicate) their righteous Cause, Luke xviii. 7. Rev. vi. 10.* And our Blessed Saviour himself, though with his dying Breath he prayed for Forgiveness to his Enemies that imbrued their hands in his Blood, is yet represented as committing his Cause to him that judgeth righteously, 1 Pet. xi. 23.

And it should be to us a matter of the highest Satisfaction to foresee, That in that final Judgment, Truth will be discovered, where History leaves Matters of Fact dark and doubtful. Every just Cause will be vindicated, that has been born down through the Ignorance or Corruption of earthly Judges. Our Blessed Lord will own those as his faithful Martyrs, who have been persecuted to Death for their steady Adherence to his Truth, whatever odious Names their Persecutors have branded them with, in order to cover their blood-thirsty Cruelty with a false Shew of Justice. The Innocence of those patient Sufferers will be set in the clearest Light, to the Confusion of the malignant Authors of them, and their persevering Fidelity in the Cause of Christ gloriously crown'd; but the Violence of their unjust Persecutors will be openly condemned and severely punished. It shall then fully appear, to the Conviction of Angels and Men, *That verily there is a Reward for the Righteous, there is a God that judgeth in the Earth, Psal. lviii. 11.*

S E R M O N XI.

On the last Judgment.

Rev. xx. 11, 12.

11 *And I saw a great white Throne, and him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away; And there was found no Place for them.*

12 *And I saw the Dead, small and great stand before God; And the Books were opened; And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life; And the Dead were judged out of those Things that were written in the Books, according to their Works.*



SINCE what the inspired Apostle represents to us as a *Vision*, shall ere long be actually presented to our View; and we our selves are so highly interested in this awful, but certainly future Event, the Subject before us every way deserves and claims our most serious and attentive Consideration. For we our selves must make up a part of this vast Assembly mentioned in my Text, and appear, not as meer *Spectators* of the Transactions of this solemn Day, but as *Persons* whose grand Cause for Eternal Happiness or Misery is then to be particularly try'd, and irreversibly decided.

That there will be such a future Judgment is a Truth, I shall not at present insist on the Proof of. I have already from another Subject (*viz. Acts xvii. 31.*) laid before you those Evidences of it, which the *Light of Nature* and *Reason* offers to us for the Confirmation of our *Faith* in this essential Branch of revealed Religion. 'Tis a Truth, which, if we, who have so clear and full a Discovery of it in the Light of the Gospel, should reject through an evil Heart of Unbelief; even Heathens themselves would rise up in Judgment against us, and condemn our unreasonable and perverse Infidelity.

And since I address my self to an Auditory of professed Christians, I shall at present take this for an Article which you all avow the Belief of. And I reckon it one great Advantage, for the due Improvement of this Subject, that I have Conscience and Judgment on my side, since what I would plead with you, and urge upon you from it, is not drawn from any controverted Point of the Christian Religion, but from an acknowledged and fundamental Principle of it.

I shall therefore from this Text, apply myself to illustrate the Process of that final Judgment, and to suggest such Particulars in reference to it, as are most proper to instruct you in your Apprehensions concerning it, and especially to awaken you to, and direct you in making the most effectual Preparation for it.

I shall not spend needless Time in proving, that this remarkable *Vision* of the inspired Apostle, does refer to this great Event of the final Judgment. All

the Expressions here used do so exactly agree to that solemn Event, and so quadrate with those parallel Passages of the Holy Scripture in which 'tis described, that the bare Explication of them will be sufficient to convince any considerate and unprejudiced Persons, that this Vision was intended as a Delineation of that final Judgment.

The words then containing a Description of the Last Judgment, I shall consider the several Particulars relating to it that are here offered to our Meditation.

I. We have here the Tribunal set.

And I saw a great White Throne.

II. We have here the Judge seated on this Throne.

I saw him that sat on it, from whose Face the Heaven and Earth fled away, and there was no Place found for them.

III. The Persons to be judged, summoned and stated before the Judge.

I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God.

IV. The Matters enquired into and brought into Trial, viz. The Works of the Dead.

V. The Evidence concerning Matters of Fact, (*viz. these Works of the Dead*) produced, The Books were opened, and the Things written therein alledged.

VI. The Rule of Trial and Judgment.

Another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life.

VII. The Judgment it self, which shall pass on all, according to their Works, as recorded in the other Books, and compared with the Book of Life, as the Rule of Judgment.

The Dead were judged out of the Things written in the Books, according to their Works.

Of each of these Particulars, I shall speak in their order.

I. We have here the Tribunal set.

And I saw a great White Throne.

We must here consider this final Judgment, as described throughout in this prophetic Vision, in Allusion to earthly Courts of Judicature.

And as in those Courts, there is a Bench, or Seat for the Judge, and for his Assessors in Judgment; or where Princes administer Judgment, there is a Throne for them to sit on; so here, when the Judge of the whole Earth is in this prophetic Vision introduced as summoning all Mankind to give up their Account, and

and to receive their decisive Doom, here is mention made of a *Throne* as his *Judgment-Seat*.

'Tis called a *Throne*, to import his Supreme Royal Authority that is to sit thereon. And to intimate also, that the Sentence he will pass in the Causes that come before him will be *definitive*; and, that there is no *Appeal* from them to any *superior Court*. In human Governments, the Sentences of *inferior Judges* may be annulled and cancelled, by the Cause being brought under the Cognizance of an *higher Court*, who are authorized to relieve such as bring any reasonable Complaints against their illegal and unjust Proceedings. But here a Sentence pronounced from the *Throne* upon a full Hearing of the Cause, is finally conclusive. The Cause is no farther cognizable at any other Bar. No *Appeal* from it can be admitted. The Judgment passed can never be *revoked* or *reversed*.

'Tis called a *Great Throne*.

'Tis justly stiled a *Great Throne*, if we consider the absolute Dominion and transcendent Glory of that sovereign Majesty, and unconceivable Glory of that blessed and only Potentate, that King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, in whose Name, and by whose Authority the Sentence shall be passed. A *Throne* infinitely raised above that of the greatest of earthly Monarchs, before which they must stand on a level with the meanest of their Subjects; and must equally abide with them, the supreme decisive Judgment thereof. For they stand before that sovereign Ruler of the World with whom there is no respect of Persons, and whose impartial Justice will no more regard the Persons of the Rich than those of the Poor.

'Tis also stiled a *White Throne*.

And this is a lively Emblem of the unstained Purity, and the inflexible Righteousness of him that sits thereon. As no false Pleas or Pretensions, how specious soever, can escape the Notice of his piercing and all-seeing Eye; so no regard to the Quality or Number of the Criminals can awe his Justice; no consideration of Self-interest can bribe it; no partial Affection can bias or mislead it. These Temptations that so often pervert Justice in human Courts of Judicature, can have no place with him, whose Power is irresistible, and yet always under the Conduct both of unerring Wisdom, and spotless Holiness and Justice. He can have no higher End or Aim in this solemn Transaction than the Manifestation of his own Glory in the unexceptionable Equity of the Sentence he pronounces upon those that are to be judged. And therefore that Sentence shall be such as, instead of leaving any stain or blemish upon, shall illustrate and display the Glory of all his adorable Perfections.

And this is all I shall suggest concerning the Tribunal or *Throne* it self.

Proceed we,

II. To consider the Judge seated on this *Throne*.

I saw him that sat on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away, and there was found no Place for them.

And in the next Verse,

I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God.

All the Question here is, *Whom* the inspired Apostle intends by *Him from whom the Earth and the Heaven fled away*!

Answer. I do not think it any way material to debate, whether we are to understand these words concerning our Blessed Saviour, considered as *Man*, (as the generality of Expositors seem to do) or concerning the Blessed God, before whom, in the next Verse, *The Dead* are said to stand.

Because, as to the thing it self, there is no doubt, but that on the one hand, the supreme and original Right of Judgment belongs to the Blessed God, whose Creatures and Subjects we are, and consequently to whom we are accountable for all our

moral Actions. He is the *Maker*, and therefore the *Lawgiver* and *Judge* of the whole Earth, to whom we are responsible for the *Observance* or *Violation* of his Laws, for our *Improvement* or *Abuse* of the Talents he has intrusted us with; and to whom it appertains to reward our *Fidelity* and *Diligence*, or to punish our *Negligence* and *Sloth*. So that this final Judgment must be either immediately exercised by God himself, or by some One as his appointed *Deputy* and *Commissioner*. The Sentence must at least be passed in his Name, and by virtue of an Authority derived from him.

And on the other hand, 'tis no less evident from the Holy Scriptures, That the Exercise of this judicial Power is committed to *Jesus Christ*. He himself tells us, *The Father judgeth no Man, but hath committed all Judgment to the Son*. He has given him Authority to execute Judgment, because he is the Son of Man, v *John* 22, 27. This judicial Power he will exercise in that human Nature he has assumed. And therefore the Apostle Paul tells us, *God has appointed a Day, wherein he will judge the World, in Righteousness by that Man, whom he has ordained, whereof he has given assurance to all Men, in that he has raised him from the Dead*, xvi *Acts* 31.

And there is an evident Congruity to the Wisdom of God in this Constitution.

For since this Judgment is to be passed openly before all the World, for the publick Manifestation of Divine Mercy and Justice, and to the full Conviction of those that are to be judged, concerning the Equity of the Sentence, upon a full and calm Hearing of the judicial Process, it was no way agreeable to these Ends, That the Judgment should be immediately administered by God himself. For as he is invisible in his Nature, and dwells in inaccessible Light, so should he make any bright Discoveries of his amazing Glory, *None could see him, and live* xxxiii *Exod.* 20. His dazzling Glory would scarce be supportable by his weak Creatures. Whose Eyes could behold those Rays of Divine Majesty, before which Angels themselves veil their Faces! Whose Ears could bear that Voice of his, at which the Earth melts; even that angry Voice, at which the Pillars of Heaven are astonished! xlv *Psal.* 6. xxvi *Job* 11. Whereas now the final Judgment shall be administered by One cloth'd with our Nature, before whom all may offer their Pleas, and from whom they may with composed undistracted Minds, receive full and clear Conviction of the Equity of their Doom.

Nor was it less congruous to the Divine Wisdom, that as the Son of God did in our Nature stoop to the lowest degree of Abasement; so he should in our Nature be thus highly exalted, by being constituted the Judge of the Quick and the Dead.

And since our Lord Jesus will come as the Father's Commissioner with all the Marks of Royal Authority, with all the splendid Retinue of the heavenly Court, to administer Judgment in his Name and stead; the Dead, when presented before his Judgment-Seat, may be properly said to stand before God, when they stand before him whom the Father has deputed and authorized for this purpose; and, when they stand before him who, in respect of his Divine Person, is Immanuel, God manifested in the Flesh, One in whom the Fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily.

And since our Lord Jesus will come in the Glory of his Father, and in his Own, 'tis no wonder, that the Earth and (this lower) Heaven are said to flee away from his Face, so that there was no Place found for them. For we read elsewhere, that in that great Day of the Lord, *The Heavens* (i. e. these lower Heavens) shall pass away with a great noise, and the Elements shall melt with fervent heat, the Earth also, and the Works that are therein shall be burnt up, 2 *Pet.* iii. 10. This lower World shall undergo a mighty Change, partly, destructive of its present Frame and Constitution, of which no Marks or Traces will remain;

main; and probably, partly *Refining*, as some conjecture from the same *Apostle's* mentioning *new Heavens and a new Earth, wherein dwells Righteousness*, as immediately succeeding this universal Conflagration, 2 *Pet.* iii. 13.

Having thus briefly considered *the Judge*, I go on,

III. To consider *the Persons to be judged*, that are supposed to be summoned and cited before their Judge.

I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God.

We may observe, that those to be judged are sometimes stiled *the Dead*; sometimes, *the Quick and the Dead*. They are here called *the Dead*, because the far greatest part of those whom that Day of Judgment will surprise were dead before; and therefore we read of *Death and Hades, or the Grave, giving up their Dead*. And because those that are found alive at the coming of Christ to Judgment, shall undergo a Change that bears a Resemblance and Analogy to natural Death. See 1 *Cor.* xv. 51, 52, &c.) They are elsewhere called *the Quick and the Dead*, because those who are then found alive will not in a strict and proper sense undergo a natural Death, though they will undergo a Change that bears some likeness and correspondence to it.

And therefore under the Name of *the Dead*, we must consider the whole Race of Mankind, as comprehended without any Exception. All those mortal Creatures that have descended from *Adam*, as their common Root in the way of ordinary Generation, and who through him had the Sentence of *Natural Death* entailed upon them. Only when they are here called *the Dead*, we must not consider them as dead, when they are said to *stand before God*, but as now *raised from the Dead*. For that general *Resurrection of the Just and Unjust*, does necessarily precede this final Judgment, and is preparatory to it. Those that *were dead* must first hear the powerful Voice of the Son of God, calling them to *arise and come to Judgment*; and must obey that irresistible Summons, in order to their making their Appearance at his Judgment-Seat.

The Persons to be judged are indeed frequently in the Holy Scriptures distributed into those two comprehensive *Ranks or Classes*, of the *Just* and the *Unjust*; the *Righteous*, and the *Wicked*; *The Sheep at the right Hand of Christ, and the Goats on his left*. And this Distribution is drawn from their different *Moral Qualities*, from the Prevalency of *Sin or Grace* in their Hearts and Lives. These different Characters being the *Ground and Reason* that will be assigned of their being doomed to different *Eternal States* of future *Happiness or Misery*.

But we have here in my Text another Distribution of them into two comprehensive *Classes*, drawn from their *external Condition and Station* in the World. They are here distributed into those two different *Ranks or Orders*, of the *small* and the *Great*. A Distribution parallel to that which elsewhere occurs, when they are distinguished into the *High* and *Low*, the *Rich* and the *Poor*, xlix *Psal.* 2.

And even this Distribution of all Mankind into these two *Classes*, of *Small* and *Great*, may afford Matter of useful Instruction to us.

1. It seems designed to convince us of the *Universality* of this future Judgment.

All that have lived and acted on this Earth, whether in an higher or lower Station from the *Prince on the Throne*, to the *Beggar on the Dunghil*, whether in Circumstances of *Plenty or Poverty*, whether *Noble or Ignoble*, whether intrusted with fewer or more Talents, whether their Capacities for Service have been *narrow*, or *Enlarged*; must yet all appear before this great Throne of Judgment. They will all be summoned by the sound of this *last Trumpet*, and by the alarming Voice of the *Arch-Angel*. They shall either freely come, or be forcibly dragged to this awful

Tribunal, without Exception of any on any account whatsoever. Neither *Small* nor *Great* shall escape the Citation, nor shun the making their personal Appearance at the Bar of their Universal Judge. There is no *Bail* admitted under this Divine *Arrest*.

2. It seems designed to obviate any vain Hopes that Persons of either Class might entertain, either of their being exempted from this future Judgment, or meeting with more favourable and easy Treatment than others.

On the one hand, some may be ready to think themselves too *small* and *inconsiderable* to fall under the Notice and Cognizance of their Judge.

They that have made so mean and contemptible a Figure on this Earth, may vainly hope to be overlooked and forgotten in this vast Assembly. They may imagine, that they who have scarce had more than one Talent to improve, shall be excused from giving any strict Account of it. They may be ready to think that God expected little or no Service from them, whose Thoughts and Time were so much taken up in Cares and Labours to provide for the Subsistence of themselves and their Families, and who had so little Leisure to mind the Duties of Religion, and the Concernments of their Souls. They may think their Ignorance and Irreligion more excusable, who have had so few advantages of Education to instruct them in the Principles of Religion, and so many hindrances and avocations from the careful Practice of it.

To obviate these vain Conceits, we are told, That the *Small* as well as the *Great* shall stand before God.

If indeed there were any that could justly pretend that they had no Talent intrusted with them, they might expect to be excused from giving any Account. But if they cannot, why should they hope for a peculiar Exemption? What if thou hadst but *one single Talent* to trade with, thou mightest as truly have shewn thy *Fidelity and Diligence* in the Improvement of that, as those that had *Five or Ten*. And it would as truly have been *accepted and rewarded*. Thou hadst a reasonable Soul capable of being for ever happy in the Enjoyment of God, or miserable in an endless Separation from him. Thou hadst some Means of Instruction (though fewer) and some Capacity (though weaker) in order to thy attaining the practical Knowledge of the Things that belong to thy everlasting Peace, and becoming *wise to Salvation*. Thou hast had the Offers of a Saviour, and through him of Pardon and Peace, Grace and Eternal Glory. Thou hast had some Time (though less) not only for the publick Worship of God, but for the Exercises of Closet and Family-Devotion, which might have been redeemed for this excellent purpose. Thou hast had some (though perhaps fewer) Opportunities and Advantages for *receiving and doing good*. 'Tis true, thou shalt not be called to Account for those Riches thou didst never possess, nor for those Works of Beneficence and Charity which thou hadst no Ability for. But thou must be accountable for thy Carriage and Behaviour in that meaner Condition wherein Divine Providence had placed thee. As, whether thou didst resist all the Temptations that Poverty might lay thee under to Lying, Dishonesty, and unlawful Ways of acquiring thy Bread; Whether thou didst on the one hand use all lawful Diligence to gain an honest Livelihood; and, on the other hand, submit with a contented frame of Mind to the wise and sovereign Dispositions of Divine Providence, casting the burden of thy anxious Cares with a filial Trust on him that cares for his Children? Whether thy Mind was suited by true Humility to thy low and mean Condition? Whether thy Poverty taught thee a more entire Dependence on God for thy daily Bread? Whether it put thee on a more earnest Concern to secure an Interest in his Favour and Loving-kindness, which is better than Life, and all the Enjoyments of Life? Whether thy low Circumstances in the World were duly

fully improved to wean thy Heart from the inordinate Love of it, and engaged thee with the greater Diligence to lay up incorruptible Treasures in Heaven, that, though poor in this World, thou mightest be rich in Faith, and Heir of that Kingdom that God has prepared for them that love him? If thou hast, with Lazarus, received thy evil things here below, hast thou been more solicitous to secure everlasting Consolation above? And happy art thou, if thou canst give a good Account of this. Whereas, if thou canst not, thy Poverty and mean Condition in the World, will no way shelter thee from the Doom of the wicked and unprofitable Servant.

Others, on the other hand, may as vainly imagine, That either their Greatness will exempt them from this future Judgment, or at least procure them a more favourable Hearing than others; and sway Divine Justice to be partial on their side. And indeed, though great Persons may be ashamed to say this, yet they plainly act as if they thought so.

They find that their Riches, their secular Honours and Power engage all others to treat them with a great deal of deference and respect. They are almost adored by their servile Flatterers, and they are too great to be reproved for their Faults by those that they think below them. And hence their Minds are apt to be swelled with so proud an Opinion of themselves, that they are prone to expect that the great God will wink at their Faults as well as Men, and excuse them from that strict Obedience to his Commands that he requires from others of a lower Rank. Some favourable Allowance they reckon must be made for Persons of their Quality and Station in the World. A very little Devotion must go a great way with them. Nay, they seem vainly to imagine, that they put some singular Honour on God and Religion, when they now and then attend his publick Worship, and pay him the Complement of their Cap and Knee. And for some Excesses of sensual Riot, for some Indulgence to fleshly Lusts, they think their plentiful Estate furnishes them with some peculiar License and Privilege above others.

To obviate such vain Conceits as these, we are here told, The Great as well as the Small must stand at the Bar of this impartial Judge.

For indeed, what are the greatest of Men to the infinite Majesty of Heaven, but contemptible Worms? Are those fallen Angels (that are called Principalities and Powers in respect of their once eminent Dignity) reserved unto Chains of Darkness against this Day of Judgment? And shall earthly Princes and Potentates think their Grandeur or Power will exempt them from it? Earthly Kings often call inferior Magistrates to an Account, and severely punish them for their Misadministration and Abuse of the Power they have trusted them with, because they are still their Subjects. And shall the sovereign Ruler of Heaven and Earth be afraid to summon the greatest of earthly Potentates, who are but his Creatures and Subjects, to his superior Tribunal? They may now look big, and because they think none on Earth can or dare call them to an Account, may cast off the Dread of God, and of their final Audit to him. But, alas! how soon will their Thoughts be changed, and one sight of their awful and almighty Judge fill them with trembling and amazement! We read, That the Kings of the Earth, and the great Men, and the rich Men, and the chief Captains, and the mighty Men, as well as every Bond-man and every Free-man, shall then hide themselves in the Dens, and in the Rocks of the Mountains, and say to the Rocks and Mountains, Fall on us, and hide us from the Face of him that sits on the Throne, and from the Wrath of the Lamb, for the great Day of his Wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand? vi Rev. 15, 16, &c. And if these Expressions be applied to the Day of Christ's Vengeance on Rome-Pagan, (as many learned Expositors suppose) how much more applicable are they to this more solemn Day of his final Judgment and Vengeance on an ungodly World.

And sure, nothing can be more unreasonable than for any to expect that any partial Favour should be shown to them in this future Judgment, because they have been great or noble, or rich, in this World.

This should rather remind them, that they have had far more Talents intrusted with them, and have therefore a greater Account to give. The more eminent your Station, the more plentiful your Condition in this World has been; the greater Obligations you were under to the Service of God, and the greater Encouragements you have had to abound therein. Such have had greater Abilities and more numerous Opportunities for doing much good. (In restraining open Ungodliness and Immorality, in relieving the Oppressed, in supplying the Necessities of the Poor and Indigent, in enlarging the Interest of serious Religion, and encouraging the Practice of it both by the influence of your Authority and your Example, and in being more considerable Benefactors to others, and eminent Blessings to the Age you lived in.) The more you have been exempted from the laborious Toils and pinching Straits of others, the more Leisure and Opportunities you have had for the Exercises of Closet and Family-Religion. And the more you have abounded in external Prosperity, the more dangerous Temptations to Pride, Luxury, Sensuality, Idleness, and an inordinate Love of this World, you had to conquer and repel. So that the Increase of your Talents on the one hand, and your Difficulties on the other, should have made you sensible of the greater need of Fidelity and Diligence in the improvement of those Talents in order to a comfortable Account of them. For there is no respect of Persons with that impartial Judge before whom you are to stand. At his Bar the meanest Peasant shall have as favourable an Hearing as the greatest Monarch. He that has made all Nations of one Blood, will have no regard to the differences of High and Low, Rich or Poor, on which Men are so prone to value themselves here. Inflexible Justice will pass as strictly on the Sinner that sat on the Throne, as on him that grinds at the Mill; and will as severely punish the Crimes committed in Scarlet and Purple, as those committed in Rags. There shall at that supreme Tribunal be no other distinction observed, with respect to the Persons to be judged, but what Sin or Grace has here made, and whether they are to be ranked among the Righteous or the Wicked.

And this leads me to consider,

IV. The Matters to be inquired into, and brought into Trial in that future Judgment, viz. The Works of Men,

For 'tis according to them we are told the Judgment will pass; and therefore they must fall under an accurate Examination and Scrutiny.

Only here we must not confine the Works of Men to their external Actions, exclusive of their Thoughts and Purposes, and of their Words.

We must not exclude their Words. For our Saviour tells us, That in that Day, Men shall give an Account for every idle Word they shall speak, xii Matth. 36, 37. The Expression does undoubtedly include all corrupt Communication, and is by many judicious Casuists extended to all vain and unprofitable Talk. All Mens profane and irreligious, their filthy and obscene, their passionate and injurious, their uncharitable and censorious, their false and deceitful Talk, will make up a part of their Indictment and Charge.

The hard and greivous Speeches that ungodly Sinners have spoken, as well as the ungodly Deeds which they have impiously committed, they shall then be convicted of, and be punished for, Jude 15.

Nor shall their very Thoughts and Purposes be exempted from this Enquiry and Trial.

All the impure Conceptions of Lust in the Mind, all the blasphemous and irreligious, all the unbelieving, all the malicious and revengeful, all the proud, all the covetous, all the uncharitable Thoughts and Intentions that Men have harboured and cherished in

their Minds, will then appear as Evidence against them, when God shall bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret Thing, whether it be Good or Evil, Ecclesi. xii. ult. For then shall the Secrets of all Hearts be laid open and judged. Rom. xi. 16. And no wonder, when all external Acts of Wickedness are first hatched and forged in the Mind, and are but the Execution of the evil Thoughts of the Heart, from whence they proceed. As our Saviour tells us, Matth. xv. 19.

Our *Works* then must be understood of all our *moral Actions*, *internal* as well as *external*. The *Latter* being the genuine Fruits and Indications of the *Former*. It will be enquired, what the Course and Tenor of every Man's Life has been, how far conformable or disconformable to the Rule of God's holy Law. Every Action shall be duly weighed, with the Circumstances that tend either to commend, or to extenuate, or to inbase and aggravate it.

The true History of every Man's Life shall then be told, without any false Colour or Disguise. All

he has *thought* and *said*, and *done*, will appear in a clear and convincing Light.

I should have proceeded to the remaining Heads, but shall close with one Practical Reflexion on the foregoing Discourse.

And,

I. From the Consideration of *the Throne being set the Judge seated thereon, and the Persons to be judged standing before God,* we may infer, how highly this great Transaction of the final Judgment deserves and requires our frequent and most serious attentive Thoughts.

And that it does so will appear, if we either consider the glorious Solemnity of it, or of what Moment and Consequence it will be to our selves, or the Necessity of such frequent Forethoughts of it to quicken us in our own Preparation for it.

But for these Considerations I shall refer to the foregoing Discourses, in which they have been more largely handled.

S E R M O N XII.

On the Last Judgment.

Rev. xx. 11, 12.

11 And I saw a great white Throne, and him that sate on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away; And there was found no Place for them.

12 And I saw the Dead, small and great stand before God; And the Books were opened; And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life; And the Dead were judged out of those Things that were written in the Books, according to their Works.



 HAVE in a former Discourse, after a short *Preface*, representing to you the vast Importance of this Subject, and the near Concernment that every One of us have in it, proposed to consider in their order the several *Particulars* contained in the Text relating to the *Last Judgment*, and the *solemn Process* of it.

We have here, *The Tribunal set ; The Judge seated on it ; The Persons to be judged, summoned and cited before the Judge ; The Matters brought into Trial ; The Evidence concerning the Matters of Fact ; The Rule of Judgement produced ; The Judgment it self.*

I. We have here *the Tribunal set.*

I saw a great White Throne.

II. We have here *the Judge seated on the Throne.*

III. We have here the *Persons to be judged, summoned and cited before their Judge.*

I saw the Dead, small and great, stand before God.

IV. We have here *the Matters* that are to be brought to a Trial in this final Judgment, viz. *The Works of Men.*

And here I shewed, That our *Works* are not to be
 confined to our *outward Actions*, but must be under-
 stood as inclusive of our *inward Thoughts* and *Purposes*,
 as of our *Words*.

Thus far I have already gone; and now shall proceed to the Consideration of the other *Particulars*

relating to this *final Judgment*, that remain to be spoken to.

And,

V. We have here the Evidence concerning these Matters of Fact (viz. The Works of Men) produced. The Books were opened, and the Things contained therein were alledged.

Here is an evident Allusion in these Expressions, to the ordinary Customs and Practice of human Judicatories. The *Process* and *Proofs* are drawn up in Writing, and *Publick Records* are often appealed to and produced in reference to past Matters of Fact. It was also usual for Princes to keep some authentick Account of publick Transactions. As we read of King *Abasuerus's Book of the Records of the Chronicles*, in the perusal whereof he found mention made of *Mordecai's* signal Service in discovering a Conspiracy form'd to assassinate that Prince, *Esth.* vi 1, 2. And in allusion thereto, we read of a *Book of Remembrance* being written before God for them that feared him, and thought upon his Name, *Matth.* iii 16.

By the Books then being opened, we must understand, That the most clear and undeniable Evidence of all Mens Actions shall be produced; even as uncontrolled and convictive Evidence, as the most known *Matters of Fact*, contained in *Publick Records*, can admit of.

All our *Thoughts and Words, and Works*, are now
penned down in God's *Book of Remembrance*. He
searches and knows us. He knows our *down-fitting and*
up-rising

rising. He understands our Thoughts afar off. He compasses our Path, and our lying down, and is acquainted with all our Ways. There is not a word in our Tongue, but he knows it altogether, *Psal. cxxxix. 1, 2, 3, 4.* Our Works of Darkneſs, though ſhrouded under the Curtains of the Night, are not hid from his all-penetrating Eye, to whom the Night ſhines as the Day, and to whom the Light and Darkneſs are all alike, *v. 12.* And theſe infallible Records of Divine Omnifcience ſhall then be produced for us, or againſt us.

Nay, every Man's Conſcience is a Book of Record, and when its ſelf-reflexive Power is awakned by God, will bear a faithful and impartial Teſtimony of his Innocence or Guilt, in order to his Acquittal or Condemnation. For the great God can ſo enlighten it, as to revive the Ideas and Memory of thoſe Actions which we have now forgot. So that no Man ſhall be charged with any particular Guilt, but what in the Judgment of his own Conſcience he ſhall ſtand clearly convicted of. None ſhall be able to plead Not Guilty to the Indictment drawn up againſt them by that God, who is now the All-ſeeing Witneſs and Obſerver of our Actions, in order to his being the impartial Judge of them. All will be forced to confeſs the Truth, and own the Juſtice of the Allegations out of theſe two unerring Books of Record. All things ſhall appear in that clear and convincing Light, that ſhall ſatisfy the whole World of the Equity of the judicial Proceſs. The Sentence will be paſſed on no dark Preſumptions, no dubious uncertain Evidence: but upon fully atteſted Matters of Fact, and thoſe owned by the Confeſſion of the guilty Actors themſelves. There ſhall then be a moſt clear Revelation, a moſt perfect and certain Diſcovery of all thoſe Works of Men, which will be the ground of the different Doom paſſed upon them. Even thoſe ſecret Sins of theirs which God now ſets in the Light of his Countenance. *Pſal. xc. 8.* will as plainly appear, as thoſe which they have acted in the face of the Sun, or which a thouſand Witneſſes can accuſe them of. In a word, *Thoſe Books will then be opened,* in which the true Hiſtory of every Man's Life is now penned down, and will then be found upon Record.

VI. We have here the Rule of Judgment produced. Another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life.

As to this Head, I muſt here premiſe, That many Expoſitors do not here underſtand any Rule of God's final Judgment, but the Book of the Divine Decrees. For they ſuppoſe the Rule of Judgment to be included in thoſe other Books that are ſaid to be opened. But they ſuppoſe the Books of God's Eternal Purpoſes, to be opened too; that it may thence appear, how exactly they will then receive their full Accompliſhment. But all do agree, That the Rule of God's final Judgment will be produced.

But I muſt confeſs, I ſee no clear ground for expounding this Book of Life, concerning the Divine Decrees. For what occaſion is there of producing the Book of God's Eternal Purpoſes in that judicial Proceſs, that is chiefly deſigned to demonſtrate to the whole World the Reaſonableneſs and impartial Equity of God's Sentence in adjudging Men to ſo different States of Reward or Punishment, according to the different Tenor of their Actions, compared with the ſtated Rule of God's final Judgment. The producing that Record of the Divine Purpoſes, may indeed ſerve to illuſtrate the Sovereignty of his Grace, who, out of the common corrupt Maſs of Mankind, has choſen ſome to be Veffels of Mercy before-hand prepared unto Glory; while others were left in that corrupt and degenerate State to become Veffels of Wrath, fitted (by their own wilful Impenitency) for Deſtruction. But 'tis the [*δικαιοσυνη*] Judicial Equity of God, as the Ruler of the World, in the Exerciſe of his Rewarding Goodneſs, or Vindictive Juſtice, according to his declared Rule of Judgment, that is then to be revealed and fully vindicated to the Con-

viction of Angels and Men. And the Opening the Book of his Decrees can contribute nothing to that.

I would therefore much rather, by the Book of Life, underſtand the Rule of God's final Judgment.

What that Rule of Judgment will be in reference to that part of Mankind that never enjoyed the Benefit of ſupernatural Revelation, we are neither much concerned curiouſly to enquire, nor, I think, able poſitively to determine. We may indeed obſerve, That when the Apoſtle Paul treats concerning the Caſe of the Gentiles, he does ſuppoſe, that they had ſuch Notices of the Divine Nature in the Works of Creation and Providence, as would leave thoſe of them inexcusable, who when they knew (or, might know) ſo much of God, did not glorify him as God, nor were thankful; but inſtead of improving thoſe Diſcoveries, groſsly corrupted and defaced them, *Rom. i. 19, 20, 21, &c.* And he ſuppoſes them to have ſomething of the Divine Law written in their Hearts, ſome Notices of Moral Good and Evil, for their compliance or non-compliance wherewith their Conſciences did accuſe or excuſe them; *Rom. ii. 14, 15.* Whether theſe and other parallel Expreſſions of the Holy Scriptures concerning them, imply their being under ſome obſcure Edition of the Law of Grace, (as ſome Divines have charitably ſuppoſed) is a Controverſy I ſhall not undertake to decide, as not affecting to be wiſe above what is written. 'Tis fitteſt for us to leave them to his Judgment, who is the God of Gentiles, as well as Jews, the impartial Judge of the whole Earth, who we are ſure will do right, and will condemn none whoſe Guilt does not leave them without any reaſonable Apology or Excuse, [*ἀναπολογία*] *Rom. i. 20.*

But for us that enjoy the Benefit of ſupernatural Revelation, there is no doubt, that the written Word of God is the Rule of his final Judgment. And that I take to be chiefly intended here by the Book of Life that ſhall be opened at that great Day. And what is here called the Book of Life, is elſewhere called the Lamb's Book of Life; becauſe 'tis not the Creator's Law of perfect and ſinleſs Obedience given to Man in his State of Innocence, but the Redeemer's Law of Grace ſuited to the State of Fallen Mankind. 'Tis that will be the Rule of our Saviour's final Judgment to all to whom it is publiſhed; as himſelf has plainly told us, *He that rejects me, and receiveth not my Words, hath One that judges him; the Words that I have ſpoken, the ſame ſhall judge him at the laſt Day, John xii. 48.*

But as to this written word of God, which is here called the Book of Life, we muſt carefully diſtinguiſh between its being the Rule of our Actions, and the Rule of God's final Judgment.

If we conſider it as the Rule of our Actions, it ſtill requires a perfect and ſinleſs Conformity to its Precepts, as our unqueſtionable Duty. And as at its firſt Delivery to Man in his State of Innocence, its Precepts were enforced with a Sanction of Death, in caſe of Tranſgreſſion; ſo that Sentence and Curſe of God's holy Law, ſtands in full Force againſt all Tranſgreſſors that accept not the Terms of Mercy offered to us through a Mediator. So that were we now to ſtand or fall in this final Judgment, accordingly as our Works are found perfectly conformable to God's written Word, as a Rule of Life, or not, our Caſe were hopeleſs and deſperate. For the whole World is become guilty before God, and according to the Rigour of the firſt Sanction of his Law, liable to his vindictive Juſtice, *Rom. iii. 19, 23.*

But as God has now, on the account of the ſinleſs Obedience and attoning Sacrifice of his own Incarnate Son, as our Redeemer, entred into a new Treaty of Peace with us; as he has now eſtabliſhed a gracious Covenant with us through him, in which a free and full Pardon is offered to all believing Penitents, and an Eternal Inheritance to all that ſeek it in a courſe of ſincere and perfevering Holineſs; and in which remedileſs and aggravated Condemnation is only threatned againſt unbelieving and finally impenitent Sinners.

Sinners. So this new Treaty, this new Covenant, including the Promises and Threatnings thereof, will be to us *the only Rule* of God's final Judgment at the last Day. By this we, to whom the Gospel is published, shall then stand or fall, be acquitted or condemned.

I may illustrate this in allusion to the Proceedings of human Courts of Judicature. You know that in the case of a Criminal, when Matters of Fact are cleared and proved to full satisfaction, the *Book of Statutes* is produced to determine, what Construction the Law puts on such Actions, and what Punishment it awards to those that are found guilty of them. But in case that there be an *Act of Royal Indemnity* and Pardon issued and appealed to (as you know 'tis usual for merciful Princes to publish such Acts of Grace in favour of such Rebels as lay down their Arms, and dutifully submit to their rightful Authority and Government) in this Case (I say) the great Cause to be try'd is, whether the Person that pleads the *Act of Indemnity* be really included in it, and by complying with the Terms offered in it, be entitled to the Benefit of it. So here, when the Matters of Fact relating to our Works are fully proved from the Records of Divine Omniscience, and those of our own Consciences, the *Statute-Book* of the Divine Law, as a *Rule of Life*, will be produced, that from the particular Precepts therein it may appear how far the Person try'd is guilty of violating them. But since there is an *Act of Grace* published in the Gospel, that constitutes new and gracious Terms of Pardon and Salvation, the great Cause to be try'd is, whether we have, or have not accepted and complied with these Terms of Mercy; and consequently are, or are not interested in this Royal *Act of Indemnity and Grace*. And this Act will be to us the decisive *Rule of Judgment* at the great Day.

If it be here objected, That if this be *the Book of Life* here intended, how comes it to be said, That the Names of particular Persons are inserted therein? Thus we read of the Apostle Paul's Fellow-Labourers, That *their Names were written in the Book of Life*, Phil. iv. 3. Thus our Saviour promises to those that overcome, That *he will not blot their Names out of the Book of Life*, Rev. iii. 5. So Rev. xiii. 8. those that worship the Beast, are said to be such, *whose Names are not written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the Foundation of the World*. See also Rev. xvii. 8.

To this Objection, I answer, That the Names of particular Saints may be fitly said to be written in the Gospel, as in the *Lamb's Book of Life*, because they are there as effectually described by their proper and distinguishing Characters, as if their Names were indeed penned down. And there seems to be an Allusion in this Expression to the Custom of Cities, or other Civil Communities, the Names of whose Members were inrolled in their publick Registers. And accordingly, all those whom the Gospel-Charter entitles to *Eternal Life*, are said to have their Names written in Heaven, i. e. to be inrolled as *Denizens* of that *Jerusalem* that is from above, as *Burgeses* of that celestial Community and Corporation. (See Heb. xii. 24.) The primitive Churches also kept their Rolls or Registers (called *Dyptics*) containing the Names of all admitted to their external Communion at the Lord's Table. But Christ's Register, or *Book of Life*, contains only the Names of such as are his living Members, and sincere Followers, and consequently of such only as are *the real Heirs of Eternal Life*. And therefore all those shall inherit it *whose Names are written there*, i. e. whom the Gospel does describe and characterise, as the Heirs of it. Whereas, we are told on the contrary at the last Verse of this Chapter, *Whosoever was not found written in the Book of Life, was cast into the Lake of Fire*. This was the Doom of all, in whom those Characters were not found by which the Heirs of Life are there described. Their Names might

perhaps be found in the *Rolls* or *Dyptics* of Christian Churches, but were blotted out of the *Book of Life*, or (what amounts to the same thing) were not found written there.

And this is all I shall at present say for the Illustration of this Head.

I now proceed to the

VII. And last Particular mentioned, viz. *The Judgment it self*, that shall be passed on all, according to their Works, as thus attested, and compared with the *Rule of Judgment*.

The Dead were judged out of those Things that were written in the Books, according to their Works.

I shall under this Head (as I did under the foregoing) wave the Consideration of the case of those Infidel Nations, that never enjoyed the benefit of supernatural Revelation, and who had no other Notices of God and of their Duty to him, but what the *Book of Nature's Light* afforded to them. I shall therefore confine my Thoughts to what we are more directly concerned in, the case of those to whom the Gospel-Revelation has been vouchsafed.

And since to us, the Gospel shall be the only *Rule of judgement*, when we are here said to be judged, the meaning is, we are first pronounced and declared to have been unfeignedly believing and penitent and sincerely Obedient; or unbelieving and impenitent and finally Disobedient; and then accordingly have the Sentence of Life or Death, of Acquittal or Condemnation, of Eternal Reward or Punishment passed upon us. And this shall be according to our Works, i. e. as those Works of ours did evidence the Sincerity of our Faith and Repentance and persevering Obedience, or did manifest our Unbelief or Impenitency and obstinate continuance in a State of Enmity and Course of wilful Disobedience.

The great Question to be decided in that final Judgment, is not, whether we are entitled to *Eternal Life* or *Death*, according to the Tenor of the *Law of Innocence*, or *Covenant of Works*? For then the case of all Men would be absolutely hopeless and desperate. But, whether we have complied with the Terms of Pardon and Reconciliation, of Life and Salvation proposed in the Gospel, in the *Covenant of Grace*, or *Law of Faith*? (As the Apostle Paul calls it in opposition to the *Law of Works*, Rom. iii. 27.) And, whether, according to the Tenor of that gracious Covenant, we are to be absolved or condemned? The great Enquiry will be, whether we have sincerely believed on and received the Son of God as our Lord and Saviour; and through him, as our Mediator, by true Repentance returned to an offended God, sincerely subjecting our selves to his rightful Government, and choosing him for our only Portion, and the Object of our final Blessedness? Whether we have in a course of sincere Obedience diligently improved the various Talents he has entrusted us with, and by patient continuance in well-doing, sought for Honour, Glory, and Immortality? Or, whether we disbelieved or slighted a merciful Saviour, and profanely or stupidly neglected the great Salvation which he has purchased and offered? Whether we have refused to return to a reconcileable God by him, with an humble Confession of our past Guilt, a penitential Sorrow for it, and unfeigned Purposes and Endeavours of new Obedience? Whether we have been wicked and slothful Servants, that have abused or hid our Lord's Talents? Whether we have obstinately persisted in a sensual unrighteous and ungodly Course, preferring our Lusts before our Salvation, and bartering away the Hopes of an heavenly Birth-right for the contemptible Vanities of this Earth? In a word, it will be enquired, whether we are in the favourable Sense and Construction of the Gospel-Covenant to be ranked among the Righteousness or the Wicked; Renewed Saints, or Unconverted Sinners; the Servants of God, or the voluntary Servants of Sin; such as have lived to God, or lived to our selves? And accordingly as this Question is decided

decided by comparing our *Hearts and Lives*, our *Spirit and Conversation* with the Gospel as the Rule of Judgment; we shall either have that welcome Sentence passed upon us, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the Foundation of the World; or that most terrible One, Go ye Cursed into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels,* xxv. *Matth.* 24. 41.

And accordingly, this decisive Sentence will determine and fix our unchangeable State for ever. There is no Appeal from it to any other Tribunal; no possibility of getting it reversed, or of preventing the irresistible and immediate Execution of it. When this Doom is once pronounced, *The Wicked shall go away* (how unwilling soever) *into Everlasting Punishment; But the Righteous into* (the compleat Possession of) *Eternal Life.* Accordingly, we read in the Context, *Whoever was not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the Lake of Fire, v. ult.*

Having thus gone through the several particular Steps in the Process of this final Judgment that are mentioned in the Text, it now remains that I should direct you to the practical Improvement and Application of this important Subject, in which we are all so nearly concerned.

And,

I. From the Throne being set, the Judge being seated thereon, and the small and great standing before God, we may infer, how highly this great Affair deserves, and should command our frequent and most attentive Thoughts. See the foregoing Sermons on Judgment.

II. We may hence infer, how inexcusable our wilful Inconsideration of this future Judgment is.

If indeed we could prevent the Approach of that awful Day by banishing the unwelcome Thoughts of it; if the Judge would delay his coming, because we delay our Preparation for it, there were some tolerable Reason to be assigned for our putting that Day far from us, by our wretched Forgetfulness of it. But if this future Judgment will certainly come, whether we think of it, or no; if we must shortly be summoned to it, whether prepared or unprepared, 'tis the height of extreme Folly to cast off the serious Forethoughts of it. For 'tis impossible that those should be duly prepared for it, who seldom or never think of it. Those that think of it, find all their Consideration no more than needful to quicken their Diligence in making ready for it; and therefore a wretched Security and Unthoughtfulness of it must be a dangerous Evidence of an unprepared Soul. And I may well ask, What should tempt any of us to forget and overlook it? If it be so uneasy a Thing to think of our final Judge now, what will it be to see him hereafter, to bear his condemning Sentence, and to fall into his avenging Hands? But the Forethoughts of this may put us on the timely Prevention thereof, by securing an Interest in his Favour. And then we may appear with Confidence before him at that great Day, and look forwards towards it as the Day of our final Redemption. And were it not infinitely better by such serious Forethoughts of this future Judgment, to stir up our selves to that effectual Preparation for it, that may render it no longer an Object of Terror to us, but rather an Object of joyful Hope; I say, were not this far better, than to sleep on in wretched Security and Neglect of that necessary Preparation, till the midnight Cry awake us, till that awful Day come upon us unawares, and we never see our Eternal Danger, till there is no hope, no possibility of avoiding it. It will then be too late to say, *O that I had foreseen and forethought of this!* For then the Throne will be set, the Judge will appear, the Books will be opened, our Works will be examined and compared with what is written therein. The Sentence will pass; and the Execution of it will be certain and irrevocable for ever.

III. We may hence infer, that there is no partial Favour to be expected by any of us at this final Judgment.

'Tis a White as well as Great Throne that is set (the Emblem of unstained Purity, and unbiassed Equity.) He that sits thereon is that awful and sovereign Majesty, before whose Face the Heaven and Earth flee away, to whose supreme Authority all his reasonable Creatures are equally subject, and on whose unerring Sentence their State of final Retribution equally depends. Before him, both the Small and the Great must stand, and with him there is no respect of Persons in his judicial Proceedings, *Rom.* xi. 6. *1 Pet.* i. 17. Even those that here sit on Thrones must there stand at the Bar, and hold up those hands that swayed Sceptres before. Crowned Heads themselves must there bow the Knee. No earthly Dignity or Power will be any Protection to them that are found Rebels against the Majesty of Heaven, or have borne that Sword of Justice, which he intrusted them with in vain. Worldly Treasures will do nothing to bribe the inflexible Justice of this heavenly Judge; nor would all of them amassed together, redeem one guilty Soul from endless Destruction. Those that are now raised so high above others by secular Honours, shall stand on a level with the lowest at that supreme Tribunal, and the latter have as favourable and impartial an Hearing as the former. Nay, the more numerous and valuable Talents any are here intrusted with, the greater and more difficult Account they will have to give.

Nor shall the mean and despicable Condition of any place them below the Notice and Regard of their universal Judge. He that has had but One Talent shall be accountable for the Improvement he has made of it. Those in the meanest and lowest Station of Life must be responsible for their Behaviour in it, and for the Duties belonging to it. In vain will any Man plead the Obscurity of his Birth, the Poverty of his Condition, or the Meanness of his Abilities, for the wilful Neglect of that Service to God, and that care of working out his own Salvation, which he was truly capable of and obliged to.

On the other hand, when the Crowns of Glory are to be distributed, the meanest Saint shall not be overlooked. The Widow's Mite, and the Cup of cold Water given by him that could give no more, from a real Zeal for the Honour of God, and unfeigned Affection to Christ and his poor Members, shall be as highly accepted, and richly rewarded, as the larger Contributions of others who gave out of their great abundance. The Piety and Devotion of him that keeps a Door in the House of God, or performs the lowest Service in his Temple, shall be as publicly owned, as his that ministers at the Altar, and presents the Gifts and Offerings of the People. The Fidelity of the Servant that performs the Duties of his Station, as a Servant to Christ, shall be as truly rewarded, as the Equity and Gentleness and Kindness of his earthly Master, by this supreme Master and Lord of both. Those upright Servants of God, whose Piety has been here almost obscured by the defectiveness of their natural Abilities, the meanness of their outward Circumstances, or the humility and modesty of their Temper, shall then shine with as bright a Lustre, as those whose Graces were set off to greater Advantage, by the greater Eminency of their Gifts or their Station. His Diligence that improved his Two Talents, shall be as truly approved; and he shall as certainly enter into his Master's Joy, as he that made the like Improvement of his Five or Ten. In a word, 'tis Mens Sincerity and Fidelity, 'tis their cordial Affection and Zeal, 'tis their Vigilance and laborious Industry, that will be chiefly considered in that Day of final Retribution, without any partial Regard on the account of their being High or Low, Rich or Poor, Great or Small. These intrinsic Considerations will have no weight with him, who without respect of Persons, will judge every Man according to his Work, *1 Pet.* i. 17.

S E R M O N XIII.

On the Last Judgment.

Rev. xx. 11, 12.

- 11 *And I saw a great white Throne, and him that sate on it, from whose Face the Earth and the Heaven fled away; And there was found no Place for them.*
- 12 *And I saw the Dead, small and great stand before God; And the Books were opened; And another Book was opened, which is the Book of Life; And the Dead were judged out of those Things that were written in the Books, according to their Works.*



HAVE already in the two former Discourses gone through the several particular Heads relating to the final Judgment contained in the Text.

I then entred upon the Practical Improvement of this important and awful Subject, by making some suitable Reflexions on the particular Heads already insisted on. And,

I. From the Throne being set, the Judge seated thereon, and the Dead, small and great, standing before him, we may infer,

1. That this great Transaction highly deserves, and should effectually command our most serious and attentive Thoughts.

2. We may hence infer, how inexcusable our wilful Inconsideration of it is.

3. From both the Small and Great standing before God, we may infer, that there is no partial Favour to be expected by any in that final Judgment.

I now proceed to make some Practical Reflexions on the following Heads.

II. From the Matters that are to be brought into Trial in this final Judgment, viz. *The Works of Men*, and of the Evidence that shall be produced concerning them, from the Books being opened, viz. the Records of God's Omniscience, and those of our own Consciences, we may infer,

1. How great regard we should have to all we think, or speak, or do, since we must be accountable for all.

We must be judged according to our Works, as inclusive of our Thoughts and Words, as well as our outward moral Actions; and therefore 'tis of great importance to us how we do herein acquit our selves.

Alas! how little care do the most take of their daily Thoughts; though perhaps they are little better than a continual Scene of Vanity and Folly, of Impurity and Filthiness, of Pride and Vain-glory, of Malice and Envy, of Rancour and Revenge, of ambitious or covetous Projects and Desires! How little do they consider, that an Omniscient God sets even these their secret Sins in the Light of his Countenance, and will bring them into Judgment! We may observe, that when he mentions that general Corruption of the

Old World, for which he resolved to bring the Deluge upon them, he particularly takes notice of this, *That every Thought of the Imagination of their Hearts was only Evil, and that continually*, Gen. vi. 5.

How little do the most regard what they speak; though their Language is generally not only unprofitable, but unfavoury, and such as tends rather to corrupt than edify, and to minister Sin rather than Grace to those that hear it! How little Conscience do many make of affronting the Majesty of Heaven by their impious Oaths and Curses, or their profane Drollery and scoffing at Religion and Piety, and those that are eminent for the Practice of it! How little do they consider, that according to that ancient Prophecy of Enoch, *The Lord cometh with ten thousand of his Saints, to execute Judgment upon, and convince all the Ungodly, not only of the ungodly Deeds which they have ungodly committed, but of all their hard Speeches, which ungodly Sinners have spoken against him!* Ep. Jude 14, 15. How little Conscience do many make of injuring the just Reputation of others by base Calumnies, or by unjust and uncharitable Censures, little considering the account they must give of every idle (and much more of every false and injurious) Word, and that by their Words they must be justified, or condemned! *Matth. xii. 36, 37.*

How little are the most solicitous about their external Actions, whether they are conformable or contrary to the revealed Will of God; whether he will be honoured or dishonoured by them; and, whether their daily Practice will have a good or ill influence on those they converse with, and will be beneficial or prejudicial to them! How little do such consider, that they shall be judged according to their Works; and that by the daily Tenor of their Actions, they are sowing those Seeds of Sin or Holiness, which will then spring up in the happy Fruits of endless Joy, or the miserable Ones of endless Horror and Despair!

How much then are we all of us concerned to call our selves daily to an Account for what our all-seeing Judge will so accurately enquire into! For if our own Heart justly condemn us, (with respect to the general Course of our Conversation) God is greater than our Hearts, and knows infinitely more by us than we do by our selves, 1 John iii. 20.

How

How narrowly then should we observe our *Thoughts*, *Inclinations* and *Desires*, our *Intentions* and *Purposes*, and even the most secret *Motions* of our *Souls*, we may approve them to the Eye of an all-knowing and heart-searching God! We should not suffer a *Mind* to range and rove at pleasure, without any *Repression* and *Control*. We should be careful and diligent to banish all vain and sinful, and to habituate them to holy heavenly *Thoughts*.

We should also keep a strict *Guard* upon the *Door* of our *Lips*, and speak nothing that is dishonourable to God, or injurious to Men; nothing that we should be ashamed or afraid to hear repeated before that vast Assembly that shall stand before his *Judgment-Seat*. We should use the utmost care that our *Communications* should be conformable to the *Rules of Truth* and *Sincerity*, *Sobriety* and *Gravity*, *Piety* towards God and *Charity* towards Men; and consequently such as tends to the *Edification* of those with whom we converse.

We should be no less studious to abound in all good Works, in all the *Fruits of Truth*, of *Righteousness* and *Goodness*, that are to the glory of God through Jesus Christ. *Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest* (or, venerable *σεμνά*) *whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report, if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, we should think on these things, and reduce them to practice*, iv. *Phil.* 8. We should herein exercise our selves daily to keep a *Conscience void of Offence* towards God, and towards Men. Towards God, by our conscientious regard to the *Duties* of the first Table; Towards Men, by the faithful discharge of the several *Duties* incumbent upon us in our relative *Stations*, whereby we may be serviceable to promote the present or eternal Good of others. 'Tis such good Works that will go along with us into the other World, as the *Evidences* of our *Integrity*, and consequently of our *Title* to that *Glory, Honour* and *Immortality* that are the promised *Reward* of our *patient continuance in well-doing*. Thus should we be solicitous to be found doing that which we may be able to review with comfort when summoned to our final *Audit*; and afraid of doing that now, the remembrance whereof would then minister ground of *Terror* to us. In a word, let us now employ our *Thoughts*, our *Tongues*, and our *Hands*, as becomes those that foresee that, according to the general Tenor and Current of our *Thoughts*, our *Words* and *Actions*, we shall be justified or condemned. And sure these Things deserve our utmost *Circumspection* that are like to be attended with so important and eternal *Issues*.

2. If the Books will be then opened (*viz.* the *Book of God's Omniscience*, and that of our own *Consciences*) we may hence learn to reverence the *Omniscience* of God, and to pay a due regard to *Conscience*, as his *Deputy* in our own *Bosom*.

We should learn to reverence the *Omniscience* of God.

He is now the observant *Witness*, in order to his being the impartial *Judge* of all our *Actions*. All our *Thoughts* and *Words*, and *Purposes*, past and present, fall under the *Notice* and *View* of his all-comprehending *Eye*, and are (if I may so speak) penned down in his *Book of Remembrance*. And those unerring *Records* will be produced to give an infallible *Testimony* for us or against us. Of how much greater *Weight* and *Consideration* should it then be with us, that the all-seeing *Eye* of God is continually upon us, than if the whole *World* beheld us! How infinitely more are we concerned in his *Knowledge* of us, and *Judgment* concerning us, than in theirs! How much more is it our *Interest* to approve our selves to his *Eye*, by whose irreverfible *Sentence* we must stand or fall for ever, than to the *Eye* of Men, whose good or ill *Opinion* of us (being but fallible) can be comparatively of little *Weight* or *Moment*!

Let us also learn to pay a due regard to *Conscience*, as God's *Deputy* in our own *Bosom*.

'Tis a just *Observation* of *Heathen Moralists*, That wicked Men are self-condemned; and, That they carry Night and Day a *Witness* against themselves in their own *Breasts*, and are continually liable to the secret *Reproaches* and *Labes* of their own guilty *Minds*. And the *Apostle Paul* speaking of the *Gentiles*, who never had the *Benefit* of God's written *Law*, yet tells us, They had a *Law written in their Hearts* (some, though obscurer *Notices* of Good and Evil engraven there) their *Consciences* bearing *Witness*, and their *Thoughts* the mean while accusing or excusing one another, ii *Rom.* 14, 15. And though some hardened Sinners have by degrees silenced the *Voice* of *Conscience*, and reduced it to that stupid *Insensibility* which the same *Apostle* elsewhere represents, by a *Conscience seared as with an hot Iron*, i *Tim.* iv. 2. Yet when God shall awaken their self-reflexive *Power*, *Conscience* will speak, and bear an impartial *Testimony* concerning their evil *Actions*. On the contrary, when the *Dictates* of well-informed *Conscience* are carefully attended to and obeyed, it will bear such a *Testimony* concerning our *Simplicity* and godly *Sincerity*, as will be a ground of solid *rejoicing* here, and enable us to look forward to this final *Judgment* with humble *Hope*, for (as the *Apostle John* speaks) If our own *Heart* (upon the most serious and impartial *Self-reflexion*) condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God, i *John* iii. 21.

O what reason have we then to observe and follow the *Dictates* of an enlightened *Conscience*, in order to our keeping it void of *Offence* towards God and Men, that we may furnish it with solid *Evidences* of our own *Sincerity*! And how fearful should we be of stifling its *Convictions*, and rebelling against its *Light*, since it will be the most unexceptionable and unanswerable *Witness* for us or against us, at this awful *Day* of final *Judgment*.

3. The *Consideration* of these *Books* being opened, should break the force of all *Temptations* to *Sin*, from the advantage of *Secrecy* in the *Commission* of it.

We see by *Experience*, how much it emboldens Men to the *Commission* of wicked *Actions*, that they have a rational *Prospect* of concealing them from the *View* of Men, and thereby avoiding the present *Shame* and *Punishment* that would attend the *Discovery* of them. The opportunity of drawing the *Curtains* of the *Night*, and the *Covert* of *Darkness* over their *Wickedness* and *Folly*, is usually a strong *Encouragement* to it. They almost think themselves safe and out of all danger, when no human *Eye* beholds them, and no earthly *Superiors* can take cognizance of their *Crimes*.

But how little would this *Temptation* prevail, if they did seriously believe and consider, that even all their most secret *Actions*, and even their very *Thoughts* and *Purposes* concerning them, are upon record; and the *Books* wherein they are written down will be opened and read! What signifies it, O stupid Sinner! that thou canst hide thy *Sins* from the *Knowledge* of thy *Fellow-Creatures*, when thou canst not hide them from the *View* of thy own *Conscience*, and much less from the piercing *Eye* of God? What, though there is no *Witness* of thy *Crimes* to appear against thee in an human *Court* of *Judicature*, when thou standest convicted at the *Bar* of thy own *Conscience*, when thy own guilty *Mind* will be instead of a thousand *Witnesses* against thee; nay, when thy righteous *Judge* is witness of thy *Crimes*, and stood looking on when thou wert committing them? Alas! if thy most hidden *Wickedness* be found penned down in the *Book of Conscience*, and in the *Book of God's Remembrance*, it will then as truly appear in its odious *Colours* to thy *Eternal Shame* and *Confusion*, as those *Actions* that are done in the face of the *Sun*, and which a thousand *Witnesses* can accuse thee of. How little advantage is it then that none knows many of thy secret *Transgressions*, when they shall so soon be

be known to *Angels and Men*, and published in the hearing of that vast and numerous Assembly, that shall stand before the Bar of God! For that Omniscient Judge will bring every Work into Judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be Good or Evil, *Eccles. xii 14.*

4. The Consideration of the Books being opened, should engage us to the greatest Sincerity in all our Transactions with God and Men.

It should engage us to the greatest Sincerity in our Transactions with Men.

The World is come to such a pass of general Corruption, that most reckon it a necessary piece of Policy to use Dissimulation in their Converses and Dealings with one another. How common is it to make a fair shew of what they never intend, and to cover their fraudulent and mischievous Designs with specious Pretences of Kindness and Good-will! So that often when their Words are as smooth as Oil, the Poison of Asps is in their Hearts. The obliging Language of *Joab*, *Art thou in health my Brother*, is often in their Mouths, when the Dagger is in their Hands. How many base Designs are carried on under the most plausible Colours and Disguises that deep Hypocrisy can gild them with!

But, alas! how little do such consider that approaching Day, wherein the Secrets of all Hearts shall be revealed; and all that Falshood and Fraud, that odious Treachery and perfidious Dealing, shall appear to their perpetual Infamy and Shame, which here they endeavoured to conceal under fair Professions and specious Appearances!

How should we then in all our Converses with Men, act under the continual Awe of the observant Eye of God, who knows whether we speak as we think, and intend what we profess, and to whom all lying Lips, all hypocritical Dealings, are an Abomination!

And the same Consideration should make us sincere in all our Transactions with God.

To how little purpose is it to impose on the Eye of Men by a false shew of an external Form of Godliness, while that Omniscient God is conscious to our Hypocrisy, who cannot be deceived, and will not be mocked! How vain and foolish a thing is it to propose no higher End in our outward Acts of Devotion, than to be seen of Men, and to gain their empty Applause, when we must stand or fall for ever, not by their charitable Opinion, who can look only on the outside of our Profession; but by his unerring Judgment, who searches the Heart, and tries the Reins. He discerns the vile Hypocrisy of those that draw nigh to him with their Lips, and honour him with their Mouths, while their Hearts are far from him. He sees the Pride or Covetousness of the Pharisee under his broad Phylactery. He observes the gross Dissimulation of those that bow their Knee to him, while the World (the Riches, the Honours, or Pleasures of it) have that Sovereignty in their Hearts and Affections that is due to him alone. He knows with what inward frame and disposition of Mind we engage in such external Duties as Prayer and Praise, bearing his Word, and communicating at his Table; and can accurately distinguish between the Language of our Lips, and that of our Hearts. All these things are exactly penned down in the Records of his Omniscience, and will appear indelibly engraven in the Book of Conscience; and what there has been of true inward Devotion, or of meer empty Show and Formality, will then be discovered to our unspeakable Satisfaction and Joy, or our Shame and Terror.

O then with what care of our Hearts and the secret Motions thereof, with what unfeigned Desires and upright Intentions should we on all occasions draw nigh to God, and worship that Omniscient Spirit in Spirit and Truth! How much more should we be concerned to be truly Religious, than merely to be thought so! For when the Books are opened, the Mask and

Disguise of the most specious Hypocrites will fall off, and the Sincerity of truly devout Worshipers shine out. And, O how amazing will the Discovery be, to the Honour and Comfort of real Saints, but to the Confusion and Disappointment of those that have only acted a part in Religion, and whose external Devotions have been only the Labour of their Lips!

From the Consideration of the Book of Life being opened, as the Rule of this final Judgment, and the Judgment it self that shall pass according to it, we may draw such practical Inferences as these.

I. We may see how solid ground of Hope those have whom the Gospel does acquit.

When we consider the glorious Perfections of our supreme Judge, that his Eyes are too pure to behold Iniquity, and too piercing for our must secret Sins to escape his Inspection and View; and when we reflect upon all the Impurities of our Hearts and Lives, we are prone, if we look no farther to tremble at the very Thoughts of the Issue, when our Eternal State comes to be finally decided. For if God should be strict to mark our Iniquities, and enter into (strict and unallayed) Judgment with us, no Flesh could be justified in his sight, *Psal. cxxx 3. Psal. cxliii 2.* Even to sincere Christians themselves, when their Apprehensions of their spiritual Condition are dark and clouded, that great Day of the Lord appears awful and terrible to them. It is therefore requisite to suggest to such for their Encouragement and Comfort, That the Book of Life shall then be opened; and the Gospel of Christ (that Law of Faith) shall be the decisive Rule of Judgment. It shall not then be enquired, whether thou hast perfectly obeyed the Law of God, as the Rule of Life, without ever swerving from it, and canst produce those Works that fully answer the Demands of it, that can bear the Trial of unallayed Justice, and under the Reward of Debt, and not of Grace, *Rom. iv. 4.* Against such an Indictment thou couldst never indeed plead, *Not Guilty*. But thou hast this solid Plea to make, That through the Merit of Christ's perfect Obedience and atoning Sacrifice, thou now standest not at the Bar of strict Justice, but before a Throne of Grace, where the Judgment will proceed according to the favourable Terms of Mercy proposed in the New and Everlasting Covenant (that remedying Law of Grace.) But the great Enquiry will be, Whether thou hast believed in a merciful Saviour, and sincerely embraced the Offers of Pardon and Salvation by him? Whether thou hast by unfeigned Repentance returned to an offended God by him as thy only Mediator, with Shame and Grief, and hatred of thy past Offences, and sincere Purposes and Endeavours of new Obedience? Whether thou hast by an unreserved Self-dedication given up thy self to God, to love and honour, to please and serve him, and to seek thy final Happiness in him as the only Fountain of it? Whether it has been the prevalent Bent of thy Heart, and Study of thy Life, to do his Will, lamenting and striving against thy manifold culpable Infirmities and Defects? Whether thou hast improved his Talents with conscientious Fidelity and Diligence? Whether thou hast cordially entertained the Promises of his heavenly Kingdom, and lived in the believing Foresight and Hope of it, and serious Preparation for it? In a word, Whether thy Life, as denominated from the general Tenor and Course of it, has been sober, righteous and godly, looking for the blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the great God and thy Saviour Jesus Christ? If thou canst herein approve thy Integrity to God, no involuntary Slips and Failures; no Sins of meer Ignorance and Inadvertency; no Infirmities that thou hast bewailed and striven against; no wilful Offences that thou hast by a particular Repentance confessed and forsaken, and sued out the Pardon of by Faith in the Redeemer's Blood, shall be laid to thy charge. All these shall be found blotted out and cancelled, and remembered (to thy Condemnation) no more. Thy Name shall be found

ound written in the Lamb's Book of Life. All thy zealous Services, and sincere Obedience, thy self-denying Duties and patient Sufferings, thy upright Closet as well as Publick Devotions, the ardent Breathings of thy Heart as well as Language of thy Lips, and all thy Works of Faith, and Labour of Love, and Patience of Hope, all thy genuine Fruits of Truth, of Righteousness and beneficent Goodness to the Bodies and Souls of others, shall then appear upon publick Record, as the ground of that gracious Sentence that shall pass upon thee. Thy repented Miscarriages shall either not be mentioned at all, or for no other End than to illustrate the Riches of Divine Grace in the free forgiveness of them. Be not then terrified at the Thoughts of that Day, wherein Christ will come to acquit those by his final Sentence, whom he here justifies and absolves by the Tenor of his gracious Covenant; and to admit those to the Possession of his heavenly Kingdom, whom the Promises of his Gospel entitle to it. For if the Characters, by which the designed Heirs of it are in those Promises described, belong to thee, thy Name is undoubtedly written in the Book of Life: Thou standest inrolled in the Register of Heaven as a Denizen of the New Jerusalem there. And the Contemplation of so great an Honour and Privilege should be now to thy believing Soul the source of thy greatest Joy and Consolation; Luke 20.

II. We may on the contrary infer, how just ground those have of Fear, in reference to this final Judgment, whom the Threatnings of the Gospel condemn.

How remediless must their Case be (without a change) who cannot stand at that Judgment-Seat, though tried by that merciful Rule of Judgment revealed in the Gospel! How unavoidably will their unpardoned Guilt sink them under the weight of God's terrible Vengeance, who either would not believe, or would not accept the compassionate Proposals of Reconciliation and Peace through the Redeemer's Blood! How certainly will those be excluded his offered Salvation, who have made light of it, and by a stupid Ingratitude neglected it, and refused to receive and obey the blessed Author of it! How certainly will those be exposed to the vindictive Wrath of God revealed from Heaven, whom his Offers of Mercy could not allure to return to him; and who, in contempt of his awful Threatnings, have obstinately persisted in a course of Ungodliness and Unrighteousness! How peremptorily are the Adulterers, the Fornicators, the Blasphemers, the Perjurors, the common Swearers, the Lyars, the Extortioners, the unjust and fraudulent Dealers, the Drunkards and Revellers, the Malicious and Revengeful, the Unmerciful and Cruel, the Proud and Haughty, the Covetous and Earthly-minded, and the like Sinners, shut out from the Kingdom of God, by his Threatnings here; and if their timely Repentance prevent not, how certainly will his final Sentence confirm their eternal Exclusion! Besides, how evidently will Mens perverse Neglect of the important Duties of Religion expose them to the condemning Sentence of that righteous Judge! Not only those that do not pray and hear, and join in the stated Exercises of Divine Worship, and that with inward Sincerity and Devotion; but even those who when they had ability and opportunity for it, did not feed the Hungry, and cloath the Naked, and visit the Sick and imprisoned; all whose external Profession of Religion did not produce the genuine Fruits of it, that were necessary to manifest their sincere Affection to their God and Saviour, must expect to hear that awful Doom, Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels.

In short, if we are such whom those awful Threatnings of the Gospel describe, we may justly conclude, that our Names are not at present written in this Book of Life. They are at present inrolled in no other Register, but that of Death and Hell. We stand already

condemned by the Gospel Rule of Judgment, and if our Repentance and Faith prevent not, are like to have the terrible Sentence confirmed by the Mouth of our righteous Judge; and made irreversibile for ever: And who would continue secure and contented in so extremely hazardous a State as this!

And this leads me to add;

III. This should therefore put us all upon serious Enquiry, whether we are such whom the Gospel, as the Rule of Judgment acquits or condemns, and consequently may hope to be acquitted, or fear to be condemned at the Bar of God?

'Tis so far from being an impossible thing to know this, that this is one end; why the Heirs of Life or Death, of Heaven or Hell are so often described in the Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, that we may foresee and discern, whither our present course leads, and what is like to be the final Issue of it. The Scriptures suppose the difference between the Children of God, and the Children of the Devil, to be manifest, from Mens different Temper and Practice, and particularly from their doing, or not doing Righteousness, 1 John iii. 10. And sure it should not be so difficult to a serious and impartial Enquirer that communes with his own Heart, to discern, what is the main Choice and Bent of his Heart, the chief Aim and Study, Care and Endeavour of his Life? Whether his pretended Faith in a Redeemer engages him, to love him, and live to him? Whether he is a voluntary Servant of Sin, or of God and Righteousness? Whether he lives in Ungodliness and Unrighteousness, or soberly, righteously and godly? Whether he improves his Time and Talents, or abuses and hides them? Whether he lives by Faith or Sense? Whether he foresees and prepares for, or wretchedly neglects his final Account? Whether his Life may be denominated in the main, a course of Well, or Ill-doing? Whether his Designs, his Affections, his Inclinations and his daily Practice, bespeak him to be Righteous or Wicked, a Lover of God and Holiness, or an Enemy to him by wicked Works? Whether he be One whose chosen and most valued Treasure is in Heaven, or on this Earth? Whether he is One that only acts a part in the Profession of Religion, or makes it the most important and serious Business of his Life?

And as the Discovery is far from being either impossible or very difficult (except in the case of great Declensions, or grievous and frequent Relapses) so surely 'tis of vast importance that it should be made. For if we find we are such as the Gospel-Promises acquit, we may not only reap the present Comfort of it, but be more confirmed in our Resolutions to persist in our holy Course, and may look forward with joyful Hope to the Day of Judgment as the Day of our final Acquittal and Justification. But if we find, we are such whom the Gospel Threatnings condemn, we may no longer dare to persist in that wretched State and sinful Course, in which we should dread to think of being found when we appear at the awful Tribunal of God; but may from a deep Conviction of our present Danger, seriously endeavour to have that happy change in our Nature, and in our State, and in our Way of Life brought about, that may give us a more desirable Prospect of the happy Issue of our approaching Account.

But this leads me to add,

IV. We may hence infer, how unconceivably joyful or terrible the Issues of this final Judgment will be, accordingly as we are found prepared or unprepared for it.

How unspeakably joyful will the Issue of it be to holy and prepared Souls!

For them to be judged according to their Works, compared with the Rule of Judgment declared in the Gospel, is to be publicly acquitted and approved, as the sincere and faithful Servants of their God and Saviour, and as such adjudged to the Possession of that consummate Felicity that he has prepared for them that love him. And if now they can rejoice in the

Testimony of their own Consciences concerning their Simplicity and godly Sincerity (though that is too often clouded with Darkness, and weakened with uncomfortable Doubts) with what ravishing Transports will the favourable Testimony and Approbation of their final Judge fill their Hearts, when they shall hear that gracious Sentence from his own Mouth, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter into the Joy of thy Lord, Matth. xxv 23.* To what holy Triumph and Exultation will those reviving Words of their blessed Redeemer raise them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from before the Foundation of the World; for I was an hungry, and ye gave me Meat, Matth. xxv 34, 35, &c. q. d.* Come ye blessed Ones that are the Objects of the peculiar Complacency and Love of my heavenly Father, enter into the Possession of that Eternal Kingdom (that State of endless Perfection and Glory, Joy and Felicity) as your *Inheritance*, which his Love has designed for you from Eternity, and which his Grace has prepared you for the fruition of. For you that have imitated his Goodness and Mercy in your unfeigned fruitful Love to others; you that have been the living Images of his Benevolence on Earth, shall now shine in the glorious Fruits of it for ever.

And no wonder if the Humility of holy Souls prompt them to make such a Reply as that which our Saviour suggests, *When saw we thee an hungry and fed thee, &c?* How will they admire the Condescension of their Judge, that he should take any notice of, and express such regard to so poor defective Services as these, and accept them as so many Acts of Kindness and Affection shewn to himself; and much more that he will assign them so unspeakably glorious a Retcompence! With what overflowing Joy in their Hearts, will they then stand acquitted at the right hand of Christ! And with what inexpressible Triumph will their exalted Head lead them to those Mansions of Glory prepared for them, where they *shall be with him for ever?* And, O with what joyful Acclamations will they celebrate for ever that matchless Grace of God, that has brought his merciful Designs towards them to so glorious and blessed an Issue; and fully inflated them in the enjoyment of that consummate Bliss, which so far transcends not only their *Deserts*, but even their most raised *Thoughts* and *Hopes*!

On the other hand, how unspeakably terrible will the Issue of that final Judgment be to the *impenitently Wicked*?

What a frightful Alarm will the sound of the last Trumpet give to their guilty Minds! What Horror will those awful words strike to their Hearts, (through the fearful Prefaces of an accusing Conscience) *Arise ye Dead and come to Judgment!* With what affrighted Looks, and trembling Souls, will they behold the Majesty and Glory of their righteous Judge, and the amazing Solemnity and Pomp of that great and terrible Day! But, O with what Confusion, with what unconceivable Agonies of anguish and distress will they themselves stand before the Judgment-Seat, when *the Books shall be opened*; when all the Wickedness of their Hearts and Lives shall be disclosed; when all their Sins shall appear attended with all the hainous Aggravations of them; when their Mask and Disguise shall fall off, when their Hearts shall be anatomized, and their most hidden Abominations be brought to Light before Angels and Men; when their final obdurate Impenitency shall have barred them from all hope of Mercy, so that they shall have no Excuse for their past Guilt, no valid Plea to offer for Pardon, no Advocate to undertake their indefensible Cause, no shelter for their guilty Souls to flee unto; when their own Consciences shall be forced to acknowledge the Crimes they are charged with, and the full Evidence thereof leave them *speechless* for ever! O with what astonishment and wounding Despair, will they hear that righteous Sentence denounced against them, (which in their Life-time they did

not believe, or would not regard) *Depart from me ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels; for I was an hungry, and ye gave me no Meat, &c. depart from me: From me the only Fountain of Life and Bliss; from me whose gracious Presence you have wilfully shunned, and must now be for ever excluded from. Ye Cursed, ye that by your monstrous Ingratitude, and obstinate Wickedness and Disobedience have rendered your selves the deserving Objects of Divine Abhorrence and Indignation, and by your final Impenitency become Vessels of Wrath fitted for Destruction. Into everlasting Fire: That Fire, where there is not only raging Heat to consume, but no Light to revive; that State of Torment of which the fury of devouring Flames are but a faint Emblem. Prepared for the Devil and his Angels: With them you must share in their Punishment, as you have done in their presumptuous Disobedience; with them you have joined in your Contempt of the Authority and Laws of God; and with them you must dwell in those everlasting Chains of Darkness to which they have been hitherto reserved, and are now to be for ever bound.*

O with what Consternation and Amazement will that just and irreversible Doom fill the Hearts of condemned Sinners, when all Intreaties or Cries come too late to prevent the remediless Execution of it! When go they must from the blissful Presence of God into a State of endless Despair, where no Ray of Mercy, no Glimpse of Hope shall ever dawn upon them, and from whence there is no possibility of Redemption! Who can express the Horrors or conceive the Anguish of such forsaken and forlorn Sinners, for whom nothing is now reserved, but *Weeping and Wailing, and gnashing of Teeth!* Expressions that significantly declare the Extremity of Grief and Rage and Desperation. And yet this is the Doom that every impenitent Despiser of God's Authority and Rejection of his offered Grace has just reason to expect.

I shall conclude my Meditations on this awful Subject with a remarkable Passage in the Reverend Dr. Bates's short *Treatise of Judgment*, p. 173.

"I have read (saith he) of an excellent Preacher that in a Sermon described the *Last Judgment* in all its Terrors, with such ardent Expressions, and those animated by such an affecting Voice, such an inflamed Countenance and Actions, that his Hearers broke forth into passionate Cries, as if the Judge himself had been present to pass Sentence upon them. In the height of their Commotion, the Preacher bid them stop their Tears and Passion; for he had one thing more to add, the most afflicting and astonishing Consideration of all the rest, That within less than a quarter of an hour, the memory and regard of that which now transported them would vanish, and their Affections return to carnal Objects in their usual manner.

I would gladly hope that none of you can hear of these most important Matters without some present serious Impression of them on your Minds. But may it not be too justly feared, That many of you will quickly forget them, and that the Thoughts of them will be as powerless and ineffectual as ever. But, O that you would once learn to *feel the Powers of the World* to come, and to act under the daily habitual sense of them! O that I could persuade you to live, as if you saw the Throne placed, the Judge seated thereon, the Dead summoned, the Books opened, and heard the final Sentence pronounced and executed. For since these Things will shortly be, why should they not in some measure affect us, as if we now actually beheld them? And since they will certainly come to pass, *What manner of Persons ought we to be in all holy Conversation and Godliness, hastning unto that final Coming of our Lord, and studious to be then found of him in peace, without spot and blameless?* 1 Pet. iii. 11, 14. For blessed are they whom our Lord will find thus prepared for his glorious Appearance.

S E R M O N XIV.

On the Torments of HELL.

Match. XXV. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.

I HAVE in the former Discourses treated concerning the last and final Judgment. I have represented to you the awful Tribunal set; the righteous Judge placed thereon; the Dead, small and great, standing before him; the Records of Divine Omniscience, and those of our own Consciences, opened, (that all our Thoughts and Words and Actions may be scann'd and try'd) the Book of Life produced, (even the Holy Scriptures, that impartial Rule of Judgment) and a final irreversible Sentence passed according to our Works, compared with that unerring Rule of Judgment.

It will therefore be very proper and suitable to give you some Account of the two different States to which that decisive Sentence of the universal Judge will determine all those whom he acquits or whom he condemns. For his irrevocable Doom will fix the unalterable Condition on all those on whom it passes; and therefore the awful Consequences of it deserve our most intense and serious Consideration. For what can more effectually instruct and excite us to make a wise choice as to our present course of Life, than to foresee what will be the certain and important Issue of it in an approaching and unchangeable Eternity.

And to that end, I have chosen to insist on these words. For our Blessed Saviour having in the foregoing part of the Chapter given us a lively Description of the solemn Process of the final Judgment, having declared to us the different Sentence that shall be passed on the Righteous and the Wicked, and the Reasons on which that different Sentence is grounded, drawn from that apparent difference in the Temper and Life of the one and the other, that abundantly manifests the impartial Equity of it, he proceeds in this last Verse to mention the final Execution of the different Doom passed upon them; *And these (i. e. the Wicked) shall go into everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life eternal.*

The words then you see represent to us the different endless Condition and Lot to which this final Sentence will adjudge the whole Race of Mankind, according as they are found among the Number of the Righteous or the Wicked.

I shall now begin with the former Branch of the Text, which represents to us the endless Condition of the Wicked, viz.

That they having received their Sentence of final Condemnation, shall go away into everlasting Punishment.

In the Prosecution of this Subject, I shall, First, Briefly consider, Who these are on whom this con-

demning Sentence shall pass; Secondly, What that State is to which they shall be adjudged, where I shall consider both the Nature of this Punishment, and the Duration of it; Thirdly, I shall add something concerning both the Certainty and Equity of this Sentence, and shall then shut up the Whole in some serious Application of the Subject to our selves.

First, Let us briefly consider, Who those are on whom this condemning Sentence shall pass;

Answer. 'Tis in general on the Wicked, who are here opposed to the Righteous.

But here I must greatly caution you against that fatal mistake that I fear so generally prevails among multitudes of ignorant People, who when they hear that the Wicked shall be then condemned, are very prone, by a pernicious Self-flattery, to take that Expression in too narrow a sense, and to confine that Character only to a few daring and enormous Sinners that are arrived to a more desperate height of profligate Impiety and Villany. When they are told of the Wicked going into everlasting Punishment, they presently conclude we mean only horrid Atheists, Blasphemers, Cursers and Swearers, open Infidels, or profane Scoffers, and injurious Persecutors, Lyars and Perjurers, Thieves and Cheats, Extortioners and Oppressors, Men of blood-thirsty or cruel Minds, Adulterers and Fornicators, common Drunkards and Gluttons, and the like scandalous Transgressors of the Law of God. Nay, 'tis much if they will extend the Character thus far. But, alas! how little do the most consider, that meer Sins of Omission, that the wilful Neglect of the important and necessary Duties of Religion, will as really denominate them wicked, and that in the unerring Account of their great Judge, as the guilt of such heinous and atrocious Crimes as I have now mentioned. (For Wickedness as well as Righteousness admit of very different Measures and Degrees) and will expose them to a different proportionable Degree of future Punishment, Luke xii. 47, 48. And yet none can doubt of the Truth hereof, that shall seriously attend the two foregoing parts of the Chapter, wherein our Saviour represents the future Judgment, and gives us the Characters of those that shall fall under this condemning Sentence in it.

For in the Parable of the Talents we may observe, he that is only charged with hiding his Talent in the Earth, is yet on that account called a wicked and slothful Servant, and therefore wicked because slothful. See v. 25, 26. And accordingly he is adjudged to be cast into outer Darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of Teeth, v. 30. So that 'tis not enough to exempt us from the Character of wicked, that we have not grossly abused our Talents to open Acts of Profaness, Impiety, Injustice, Cruelty,

Cruelty, or like the Prodigal, *spent them in riotous living, &c.* 'Tis sufficient to evidence our being wicked, that we have not improved them to the Honour and Interest of our great Master, in a course of positive *Godliness, Righteousness, Sobriety and heavenly-mindedness.* So in the other plainer Description of the final Judgment, we may see who those *Wicked* are that are doomed *as accursed to everlasting Fire*, by the reason assigned why that terrible Sentence is passed upon them. And there's no other mention but this, *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no Meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me no Drink; I was a Stranger, and ye took me not in; naked and ye clothed me not; sick and in Prison, and ye visited me not,* v. 42, 43, 44. i. e. they did not manifest any sincere prevalent Love to Jesus Christ, by the costly Fruits of their beneficent Love to his indigent Members. Where 'tis observable, he does not accuse them of having persecuted him in his faithful Servants, of having injuriously stripped them of their Possessions and Goods, of having wrongfully imprisoned them, or any way exposed them to grievous and unrighteous Sufferings; he only charges them, as shutting up the Bowels of their Compassion from them, as denying them that expensive Relief and Succour which they were capable to have afforded them, and thereby manifested that they loved the World better than their Blessed Saviour, and preferred their Interest before their Duty. And this he gives as a sufficient ground to justify that dismal Sentence pronounced against them, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, &c.* So instructive and of such awful Consideration to the generality of pretended Christians, are these remarkable Words of our Blessed Saviour.

So that hence you see the Number of the Wicked is far greater than most are aware of. What, though you do not blaspheme, or curse and swear, or vent the Enmity of your Hearts against God in the common scornful Language of an atheistical and profane Generation, 'tis sufficient to denominate you Ungodly, that you do not maintain a stated course of *reading, or bearing the word of God, of praying and meditating,* and attending all the known Duties of private and publick Worship. Nay more, that you make not the great and blessed God the Object of your highest Esteem and Love, your most ardent Desires and satisfying Delight, your profoundest Reverence, and most ingenuous Trust, your most entire devotedness and unfeigned Subjection. If any thing have a greater Interest in your Hearts, and Command over your Lives than he. What, though you wrong no Man, much less persecute and injure the Children of God; 'tis enough to denominate you Uncharitable, and consequently Wicked, that you do not in any tolerable proportion to your Ability supply their Necessities, assist and support, relieve and comfort them. What, though you spend not your plentiful Estates in all the extravagant Excesses of luxurious Debauchery, 'tis enough to denominate you unfaithful and wicked Stewards, that you have not laid them out to any of those uses, of promoting the Interest of God and serious Religion, and doing good to others, for which he entrusted you with them; but have preferred the narrow Love of your selves and your Posterity, before the glory of God, and the publick Good. What, though you have used no unjust Ways to acquire your Riches, and lay up your earthly Treasures, 'tis sufficient to denominate you Covetous, and therefore Wicked, that your Affections have been so eagerly set on this World, and you have been so drowned in the immoderate Cares of it, that the daily Service of God, and the serious Care of your own Salvation has been woefully neglected; and the Glories of the heavenly Kingdom postponed to your *Farms and Merchandize.*

And, O that none of you may be found under some of these Characters of wicked Persons, who are so loth to suspect any such thing by your selves, because you are not Sinners of the first Rank and Magnitude! For there are various degrees of *Wickedness*, and yet the least sufficient to expose you to some degree of this *everlasting Punishment.*

I therefore proceed,

Secondly, To consider, what that *State* is to which the *Wicked* shall be judged.

And since 'tis here called *Everlasting Punishment*, I shall more particularly enquire into the *Nature* and the *Duration* of this Punishment.

And,

I. Let us consider the *Nature* of this *Punishment.*

And here I must premise, That you are not to expect any more than some general Account of it. A particular and accurate Description of that Punishment is only to be given by those miserable Wretches that already feel it. The *Torments of Hell*, as well as the *Joy of Heaven*, are yet in a great measure unrevealed to us, and we can then only expect any accurate Notion of them, when the Vail of Mortality is rent, and the great Objects of an unseen State are presented to our View. And indeed, 'tis sufficient to the great Purposes of Religion, that we understand so much of the Terror of that future Punishment, as should in all reason warn us to flee from it, and caution us against the pernicious Paths of Sin that lead to it. For the wise God designs not by what his supernatural Revelation suggests concerning it, to gratify a vain and useless Curiosity, and therefore only discovers so much concerning it, as may make us *wise to Salvation*, by happily avoiding it.

And what Apprehensions concerning the Nature of that future Punishment the Scriptures lead us to by their various Expressions concerning it, I shall briefly endeavour to set before you; and indeed, the foregoing Sentence of our Lord it self, will give us some considerable Light into this Subject.

Now, in clearing the *Nature* of this future Punishment, we must distinctly consider the privative and positive Part of it, or as they are commonly and justly distinguished, *the Punishment of Loss* and *the Punishment of Sense.*

And,

1. We must consider the *Privative* part of this *Punishment* of the Wicked, or (as 'tis called) *the Punishment of Loss.*

And this no doubt will chiefly consist in their being banished from the beatifick presence of God, from the heavenly Region, and from the Society and all the Privileges of its blessed Inhabitants.

This is in part intimated in that Expression in the Text, *They shall go away, ἀπελεύσονται.* And more fully expressed in the Sentence that shall be passed upon them, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, &c.*

They shall be abandoned to an endless Separation from the Blessed God, the only Fountain of Life and Light, of Joy and Blessedness. Their wretched Souls being entirely forsaken by him, will lose even all the remains of that amiable Image of his that was once stamped on human Nature. All Influences of his Grace will be for ever suspended, and his resisted Spirit will then retire from them for ever. He will no more inspire one good Thought into their Minds, or one holy Purpose into their Hearts; all Attempts to reclaim and reform them will cease for ever. Nay, these condemned Sinners shall be entirely excluded from the Favour and Mercy of God, and from the least reviving Hope of it. No Invitations to return, no Offers of Pardon and Peace, no merciful Entreaties to accept of them, shall be any more addressed to them. All Treaties of Reconciliation are at an end. All Cries for Pity and Commiseration (how importunate soever) are now fruitless and come too late for ever. The Bowels of Divine Compassion will then be remedilessly shut up towards them; no Smile of God's pleased Countenance, no Ray of Divine Favour shall ever dawn upon them more; the wonted Current of Divine Mercy is now wholly intercepted. A compassionate God will be gracious no more, his Ears are for ever stopped to all Solicitations to spare or save them.

Accordingly, they shall be banished from his heavenly Court, the place where he manifests his ravishing Glory, and communicates his felicitating Love to all the happy

happy Attendants on his exalted Throne: They must be shut out for ever from that bright Habitation of his Holiness, and become perpetual Exiles from those amiable Mansions of Light, into which none but the Children of Light shall be received. And consequently, they must be thrust out of the Society of the Saints in Light, and excluded from the desirable Converses and Entertainments; from the noble Work and satisfying Joys, from the transcendent Perfection and Blessedness of that glorious and holy Community. The Gates of the heavenly Jerusalem shall be for ever barred upon them. An unpassable Gulph shall cut off all Possibility and Hope of returning to those forfeited Regions of endless Bliss. See Rev. xxi. 8, 27. Luke xvi. 26. While they behold those holy Souls, whose serious Piety they here scorned or despised, admitted with Honour and Triumph to sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, with the Patriarchs, the Prophets and the Apostles, in the Kingdom of Heaven. They shall see themselves thrust out to their eternal Shame and Confusion; Luke xiii. 28, 29. Their Eyes shall never behold the Beauties of the heavenly World, their Ears never hear the triumphant Songs of the Celestial Choir; not one drop from those ever-flowing Rivers of Divine Pleasure and Joy shall be afforded to cool their enflamed Tongue.

And how small a matter soever blind and stupid Sinners may now make of this, yet when the Light of the Eternal World has opened their Eyes to discern the worth of Things, the Nature and Capacities of their own Immortal Spirits, the transcendent Excellency of the heavenly State, and consequently the glorious hopes from whence they are fallen, they'll then too late be sensible; what an extremity of Misery it is to sink from the prospect of so unspeakable a Felicity; they'll then see the Truth of what our Saviour had in vain forewarned them of, *That the Loss of a precious Soul is too great for the whole World to compensate; That 'tis a Loss that can never be duly estimated, and never can be any way repaired.* See Mark viii. 37, 38. Of which more may occur under the next Head.

Let us then,

2. Consider the *Positive* part of this Punishment which the Wicked shall be adjudged to.

This, in the foregoing Sentence, is expressed under the Notion of *Fire*. *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into everlasting Fire.* And accordingly, 'tis usual with the Scripture to employ this Metaphor for representing the Torments and Miseries of the damned. So Isa. xxxiii. 14. *Who among us shall dwell with the devouring Fire? Who shall dwell with everlasting Burnings?* So Psal. ix. 6. *Fire, Brimstone, and an horrible Tempest* are said to be the Portion of the Wicked's Cup. See also Isa. lxiv. 24. Mark ix. 44. So Isa. xxx. ult. the Prophet speaks of *Tophet, ordained of old, the Pile whereof is much Fire and Wood, the breath of the Lord like a stream of Brimstone doth kindle it.* So Jude 7. 'tis called the *Vengeance of eternal Fire*. And Rev. xx. 10. *The Lake of Fire and Brimstone, whose Torment is for ever and ever.* I confess, I do not think there is any necessity of understanding these Expressions of material Fire. For since 'tis so usual with the Scripture to represent to us the Felicity and Joys of Heaven, by what is most pleasing and glorious to our senses, as by a *Feast, a Kingdom, a Crown, a Marriage, &c.* so 'tis no wonder that the Miseries of Hell should be also set out by what is most dismal and terrible, or what occasions the most exquisite Pain and Torture; as by the *unquenchable Fire, the never-dying Worm, outer Darkness, Chains of Darkness, an Infernal Prison, &c.* So that we have no more reason to understand the Expressions on the one hand in a strict literal sense than those on the other.

But yet this Expression of *Fire* may fitly represent to us three chief Ingredients of the Punishment

of the damned; viz. *The anguish of an accusing despairing Conscience, the tormenting Sense of the inexorable Wrath of God, and the rage of our own unsatisfied Lusts.* And these three seem to make up the most of what we can here conceive of their future Misery.

1. One Ingredient of the Punishment of the Wicked will be the *Anguish and Torment of an accusing and despairing Conscience.*

And this I take to be what our Saviour chiefly intends by *the Worm that never dies, and the Fire that never goes out, Mark ix. 44, 46, &c.* Conscience in its enraged Reflexions, will be to the Sinner as a *Worm* that's perpetually gnawing his Vitals, like a *Flame* that's incessantly scorching his inward Parts. And doubtless he refers to this part of the Misery of the damned, when he so often speaks of *Hell*, as the place where there is *weeping and wailing and gnashing of Teeth, Matth. xiii. 42, 50.* Expressions that denote the most piercing Grief arising from the utmost degree of Desperation and Rage.

And no wonder that this should be one chief part of the Punishment of the damned, when we observe how mighty an Agent the Soul of Man is capable to be in its own Happiness or Misery, by its own restless Thoughts. And when we farther consider, that where-ever a condemned Sinner turns his Thoughts, he finds nothing but what administers to his inward Vexation and Despair. If he look backward to this World he has left, and the Life he has here led, what abundant Matter occurs of grievous and bitter Reflexions; if he review his Actions, what a Scene of perpetual and shameful Folly appears to his Eye; how numberless, hateful and detestable Sins stare him in the face; the remembrance whereof, fills him with Horror and Confusion! If he look back on his earthly Enjoyments and sensual Delights, and particularly on the past *momentary Pleasures of Sin*, alas! they are fled and gone, and have left nothing but a tormenting Sting behind. If he reflect on the compassionate Offers of Divine Grace, and its merciful Methods to recover and save him, alas! those slighted Offers are now recalled, and shall never be tendered more; those opposed Methods are finally frustrated; and the Day of abused Patience and Grace is at an End, and the Day of final Retribution and Vengeance has now succeeded it. If he look upwards, what can he there fix his Thoughts upon, but that righteous God, whose long-suffering he has now turned into inexorable Fury; that blessed Society from whose Converse he is perpetually banished; that heavenly Felicity and Glory, which once indeed was proposed to his choice, but the Proposal being ungratefully despised and rejected, he is now by a peremptory Sentence eternally excluded from it! And, O with what enraged and self-upbraiding Thoughts, will the condemned Sinner reflect, and say, And is this the unspeakable Blessedness which I so wretchedly undervalued and slighted, which I preferred so contemptible Trifles before? Is this the Celestial Birth-right that I sold for a morsel of Meat? Are these the endless Joys which I bartered away the hopes of for a transitory Dream of carnal Jollity? Is this the invaluable Pearl of Price that I sold for a little earthly Dross? Nay, is this the Heaven that I parted with for the momentary satisfaction of a vile and hateful Lust! O that those past Offers of Life and Salvation could be recalled; but, alas! 'tis now too late for ever! If he look round about him, whom has he to converse with, but those accursed Fiends that will now prove his Tormenters, as they were once his Tempters; and those other Companions in Sin here on Earth, the very sight of whom calls his past Guilt to his unwelcome Remembrance. If he look forward, he sees nothing before him that can administer any hope of Relief; on the contrary, the certain Prospect of a miserable Eternity does above all things amaze and confound him. (Of which more hereafter.) So that

his own uneasy perplexed Thoughts are a continual Spring of new Anguish and Terror to him. He carries a perpetual Hell in his own Conscience, whose unanswerable Challenges and wounding Reproaches, and direful Lashes are intolerable. Of which we have some lively representation in the horrid Agonies, and insupportable Fury of some despairing Sinners on Earth, when they had nothing left them but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation. I mean such as *Francis Spira*, and others that have been driven to the like Desperation; (not to mention the Scripture-Examples of a *Cain* and a *Judas*.) And we may reasonably suppose that these bitter Reflexions of an enraged accusing Conscience will be the more restless and grievous in that future State, where wretched Sinners will have nothing else to entertain their busy Thoughts. They can here do much to silence the Voice and drown the Clamours of Conscience in the Noise of worldly Business or Pleasure; but there they can expect no such Diversions. The miserable Sinner can there no longer flee from himself, and can meet with no Objects but what rather sharpen than dull the Edge of these cutting Self-reflexions.

But,

2. Another Ingredient of the future Punishment of the Wicked will be, *The affrightful sense of the inexorable Displeasure and Wrath of an incensed God*.

And this is very fitly represented by *Fire*, or as *Jude* speaks, by *the Vengeance of Eternal Fire*. And hence (in the fore-cited place, *Isa. xxx. v. ult.*) *The breath of the Lord is said like a stream of Brimstone to kindle the Fire of the Infernal Topbet*. And that terrible Majesty on the account of his tremendous Justice, is called a *Consuming Fire* (*Heb. xii. v. ult.*) And, O how terrifying must the Apprehensions of an Almighty God, considered as a righteous Lawgiver and Judge, be to a condemned Sinner that's now fallen into his avenging Hands, when he considers he can no way resist his Power, nor escape the utmost effects of his tremendous Indignation. Even this will be enough to turn the condemned Sinner into an accursed Fiend, in whose Breast despairing Fear does at once create an impotent Rage, and yet a perpetual Trembling and Consternation. How indeed a just and sin-avenging God will execute his Wrath, is what we are now wholly ignorant of; but sure we are, those must be extremely miserable that are remedilessly exposed to it. So that well might the Psalmist even when he seems to have chiefly contemplated the temporal effects of it, cry out with astonishment and awe, *Who knows the power of thine Anger? According to thy Fear, so is thy Wrath, Psal. lxxxix. ii.* Our Fears under the strong Alarms of a guilty Conscience are next to boundless and infinite; but the Wrath that's armed with infinite Power, must needs exceed our most unbounded Fears themselves. And hence those words are used to aggravate the Punishment of the Ungodly, that 'tis a *destruction from* (or as others rather ἀπὸ by) *the presence of the Lord, and by the glory of his power, or, by his glorious power*. As if the glory of Divine Power were to be illustrated by the terribleness of it. And, O with what deep Wounds will the Sword of Justice pierce into the Sinner's Heart when wielded by an irresistible omnipotent Hand! How unconceivably dismal must the Case of those *Vessels of Wrath fitted for destruction* be, on whom so terrible a Majesty resolves to *show his Wrath, and to make his power known, Rom. ix. 22.*

But,

3. Another Ingredient of the future Punishment of the Wicked will be, *The continual Rage of their own unsatisfied Lusts*.

And those impure and brutish Desires, which in the condemned Sinner will be as vehement as ever, must needs create a continual Torment to one that can find no Objects to gratify them with. And even these impure Flames are fitly compared to a Fire, a

Fire that will furiously prey upon the Soul it self when it has no external Fuel to feed upon.

How miserable may we conceive a condemned Sinner to be, when possessed with the most inveterate Enmity against that Blessed God, whom his impotent Malice cannot hurt, whose transcendent Glory and Blessedness he can only envy and malign! For all his hellish Rage is but fruitless and recoils upon himself. Nay, how wretched must the Sinner be that carries with him into the other World, the same irregular Passions, the same sensual Lusts, the same carnal Desires and Affections that here possessed his Heart, when there he has none of those earthly Enjoyments and brutish Pleasures, or other suitable Gratifications for them! What a Torment must it be to burn always in the Flames of his own unquenchable Desires, and to covet perpetually that vile Fuel of his former *Luxury, Pride, Intemperance, Lust, Covetousness*, and other inordinate Affections that's now withdrawn for ever! In a word, to find all those things vanished on which his Hopes and Happiness were placed, and to which, though his Heart still inseparably cleaves, yet he despairs ever to enjoy. This will be a most just but truly dreadful part of the Sinner's Punishment.

And thus far I have, according to what Intimations the Scripture gives, offered you some general Account of the Nature of the Sinner's future Punishment. But I am conscious to my self, that all I have said, falls unspeakably short of the Terror of it. For what the Apostle speaks of the *Joys of Heaven*, I doubt not is in a greater measure equally applicable to the Terrors of Hell, *That Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of Man to conceive*, the terrible things that a righteous God has prepared for them that finally hate, and impenitently provoke and disobey him.

But yet all I have said concerning the Nature of the Wicked's future Punishment, will receive a considerable and terrible Addition from that one Epithet the Text gives it, of *Everlasting Punishment*; which therefore leads me to consider,

II. The Duration of this Punishment: 'Tis *Everlasting*.

And truly 'tis hard to say, whether its Nature or its Perpetuity render it the more justly dreadful! O Eternity! How does it amaze and confound our Thoughts! How are our weak Minds swallowed up and lost in the Contemplation of it! For this one Circumstance makes a vast Accession to the Torments of the Damned as well as the Joys of the Blessed.

For the Eternity of the Wicked's Punishment implies that it will have no Intermission, and no End.

No Intermission. For Eternity seems necessary to imply unchangableness in the Subject of it. 'Tis the alterations and vicissitude of our State in this World that gives Time its Motion, and its several Intervals and Epochs. 'Tis the Immutability of the future State that bespeaks it Eternal. How miserable then are those whom the Immortal Worm ever gnaws, and the Unquenchable Fire continually preys upon; and who, though tormented in that Flame, have not one drop of Water to cool their Tongue. To allude to what you read of the rich Man, *xvi Luke 24*. They can no more flee from the bitter Reflexions of an enraged Conscience, than flee from themselves; and no more interrupt the Misery that springs from them, than extinguish their Life it self.

No End. And, O how unconceivable an Aggravation of their Punishment is this! If when a Duration equal to many Millions of Ages were past, condemned Sinners might have any assurance of Redemption from their Misery, even that slender hope would be some, though small Mitigation, of the Horror of their State. 'Twere some ease to their Torments to foresee any possible End of them at how remote a distance soever. But, O what an amazing and insupportable Thought, that all the vast space of

Time that *Arithmetick* can compute, or thy Thoughts measure, are as but one Moment in Comparison of *Eternity*, and when pass'd thy Misery will be as far from ending as ever! O dismal! to be thus adjudged to endless and remediless Woes, to live for ever only to be miserable and wretched for ever! To have thy Being and Life perpetuated only to be a standing Monument of the terrible Justice of God to eternal Ages! O, into what extremity of Rage and Despair must such a Thought cast a condemned Sinner! For hereby it does as it were anticipate its future Misery, and almost feel in one Moment what it must feel for ever. 'Tis a just Observation, That in our Enjoyment of any Pleasure, Time slips away with a quick and unobserved Motion, so that it seems much shorter than it is; whereas in Pain, its Motion seems slow, and even the least Moments of it are tedious. How then must it enhance the Misery of the damned, when besides the pungent sense thereof at present, they have before them the certain but terrifying Prospect of its endless Duration! How then must the Thoughts of that Eternity as much overwhelm them with astonishing Horror and Desperation, as it transports holy Souls with unconceivable Triumph and Joy.

I shall at present close this Discourse with the following Reflexions.

Must the *Wicked* thus go into *Everlasting Punishment*.

Then,

I. Let me hence urge all of you to frequent Meditation on this awful Subject, *The Eternal Punishment of the Wicked*.

—I am sensible indeed, that I am here proposing an unwelcome Theme to your Thoughts, especially to those of licentious and secure Sinners. And perhaps some of them may be ready to say to me, as those two miserable *possessed* Persons did to our Saviour, *Art thou come to torment us before the time?* *Matth. viii. 29.* Were we only here to act our Part on a Stage; were it only our design to gratify your Ears or Minds with a few empty flourishes of Wit, or a few curious but useless Speculations; or did we intend to gain your Applause by suiting our Doctrine to your Inclinations, we should insist on more soft and pleasing Subjects than these. Or did we take *Hell* to be no other than a *frightful Fancy*, and the *Eternal Flames* to be only a *painted Fire*, we should forbear to speak of them; or at most, *speak* of them, as most seem to *believe* them, only in a superficial and formal manner. But if we are fully persuaded that the Threatnings of the Gospel are true, and the Torments of *Hell*, the most certain and terrible Realities; it were most inexcusable in us, if we should not, when we know these *Terrors of the Lord*, with all possible earnestness and importunity warn you of them, and *persuade* you to flee from them, *2 Cor. v. 11.* And how can we ever expect to do that, if you will not once take them into your serious Thoughts. I would therefore at present beseech you to employ some Time to recollect and ponder what you have heard or read concerning the future *Punishment of the Wicked*. For the serious Contemplation thereof will be of use to all of us. Even the *Righteous* themselves have frequent occasion to set the Miseries of the damned before their Eyes; they often need the believing Fears of *Hell* it self to arm them against the Surprises of violent Temptation, and to quicken their too negligent Endeavours to escape it; and even the best of Men may improve the realizing Views of that future Misery, as the most sensible and powerful Incitement to adore that grace of God that has *plucked them as Brands* out of that *Infernal Fire*. But above all, this is a most proper and suitable Subject for the Thoughts of careless and stupid Sinners, how averse soever they are to fix their Minds upon it. I know it will be hard to persuade you hereto, because you apprehend it may give you some present disturbance by

alarming your guilty Fears. But what, though it may be for the present an ungrateful and melancholy Subject, yet one would think the following Considerations should take off the force of that Objection, and effectually engage you to think of it.

1. Consider, you cannot prevent that future Punishment of the *Wicked*, by casting off the present Thoughts of it.

The Day of Judgment and Perdition of the Ungodly hastens apace, whether you foresee it or no. You cannot defer its Approach, by putting the Thoughts of it far from you. And you can no more quench the Flames of *Hell*, by your wilful Inconsideration of them, than you can extinguish the Light of the Sun, by shutting your Eyes upon it. So that you are never the safer from the *Vengeance of Eternal Fire*, because you banish the present Fear of it. *The Damnation* of impenitent Sinners it self *slumbers not*; though, while they are asleep in Sin, they are wholly insensible of it. A stupid forgetfulness of the *Wrath to come* is no Security or Protection from it.

2. Consider, your wilful Inconsideration of that future Punishment does but tend to betray you more unavoidably into it.

And since you are remedilessly miserable if you escape it not; is it not better to think of it now, in order to the preventing it, than by banishing the Thoughts of it, to bring it more certainly upon your selves, and render the prevention of it more hopeless? How can it ever be expected you should abandon your sinful Course, if you foresee not the dangerous and dreadful Issue of it. So that the longer that is hid from your Eyes, the longer you are like to continue obstinate and hardened in your Sins. And is it not better to foreknow your danger, while it may yet be obviated, than to encrease it by stupid forgetfulness, and perhaps never think of it, till all Attempts to escape it come too late for ever? For any thing thou knowest, thou art now standing on the brink of that endless Destruction, and wilt thou rather sink into it for ever than bear the trouble of a few serious Thoughts about thy hazardous and miserable Condition, in order to the remedying of it? If it be so frightful to think of the Miseries of *Hell*, how much more terrible will it be to feel them? And wilt thou choose rather to be undone by a pernicious present Security, than saved by a timely preventive Fear?

If not,

3. Consider, the Forethoughts of that future Punishment, are the most likely means to excite your effectual Endeavours for preventing it.

For this is an Argument suited to one of the strongest Passions of human Nature, our Fears. Nay, 'tis almost the only Argument that sensual and secure Sinners seem at first capable of being affected and moved by. If we endeavour to reclaim them to their Duty, by setting before them the endearing Obligations of Divine Love, this is an Argument that may indeed touch an ingenuous Mind, but is likely to make little Impression on an unthankful and stupid Heart. If we would entice them to the Paths of Holiness, by proposing to them the spiritual Joys that attend them, alas! they neither understand nor relish them; if we would win and attract them by displaying the glories of Heaven before their Eyes, the Objects are too sublime and spiritual, too pure and refined for their gross Affections to aspire to. So that we have no Argument so proper as this, to set before them the *Torments of Hell*. For those are more easily understood and conceived; and if seriously believed and considered, they carry the most irresistible Force to awaken the Consciences of the most stupid Sinners, and convince them of the Necessity of fleeing from the *Wrath to come*. For who can dwell with the devouring Fire? Who can dwell with the everlasting Burnings? (as the Prophet speaks, *Isa. xxxiii. 14.*) This is an Argument that reaches that Principle of

Self-

Self-Preservation, so deeply rooted in our Nature, that strongly prompts us to flee with all possible speed from what we apprehend to be the greatest and most certain Evil. So that if any Argument can make Impression on an obdurate Sinner, it must be thus drawn from the Prospect of Eternal Vengeance, as *hard Metals* are soonest melted by the Fire. If any Consideration can make a secure Sinner tremble and quake, it must be the Terrors of a future Judgment, and the dismal Consequences of it. So that for ungodly Sinners to put away these necessary Thoughts, is to overlook the only Argument that's likely to prove at first prevalent and persuasive with them.

4. Consider, if the Forethoughts of that future Punishment awaken you to serious Repentance, they will in a great measure free you from the terrifying Fears of it.

If thou wouldst but now (Sinner!) so contemplate the Miseries of Hell, as to forsake the Paths that

lead to it, the very Thoughts of it would be no longer so uneasy and frightful; for they are justly frightful only to those that are conscious of that Guilt that exposes them to it. So that if thy present Fears did but produce a happy Change in thy Heart and Life, that would lay the Foundation of a sweet Serenity and Peace. Were thy Enmity against God turned into predominant Love, thy guilty Fears would be also in a great measure changed into joyful Hope. And thou mightest contemplate this Punishment with Thankfulness and Joy, that thou hast so comfortable a Prospect of escaping their miserable Doom, and enjoying a happier Lot for ever. O then think now of the Miseries of Hell, that thou mayst never feel them! Now, by Faith foresee and contemplate the deplorable State of the damned, that thou mayst never come into this place of Torment!

S E R M O N XV.

On the Torments of HELL.

Matth. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.



HAVE made some Entrance on the former Branch of the Text, viz.

The Wicked having received their Sentence of final Condemnation, shall go away into *Everlasting Punishment*.

In the Prosecution of this Subject, I have already considered,

I. *Who* those are on whom this condemning Sentence shall pass.

Answer. 'Tis in the general, on the *Wicked*, as opposed to the *Righteous*.

II. What that *State* is to which the Wicked shall be judged.

And since 'tis called *Everlasting Punishment*, I here proposed to enquire into the *Nature* and the *Duration* of it.

First, For the *Nature* of it, I considered according to the common distinction, the *Privative* and *Positive* part of it.

1. The *Privative* part of it, consists chiefly in their being banished from the beatifick presence of God, from the heavenly Region, and from the desirable Society of its blessed Inhabitants, and from all the inestimable Privileges they there enjoy.

2. The *Positive* part of it; and that chiefly consists in,

The *Anguish* and *Torment* of an accusing despairing *Conscience*.

The affrightful *Sense* of the inexorable *Displeasure* of an incensed Almighty God. And,

The continual *Rage* of their own unsatisfied *Lusts*.

Secondly, For the *Duration* of this *Punishment*, 'tis *Everlasting*.

And the *Eternity* of it implies,

That it will have no *Intermission*, and no *End*.

I proceed now,

III. To consider the *Certainty* and *Equity* of this *Everlasting Punishment* of the *Wicked*.

First, The undoubted *Certainty* of it.

And as to that I need only suggest, That we have clear Evidence from the Light of Nature, that there is in general a *future Punishment* reserved for the *Wicked*. And that we have much fuller Assurance, not only of such a *Punishment* in general, but of its *Nature* and *endless Duration* from the Light of Divine Revelation.

1. We have considerable Evidence from the Light of Nature, That there is in general a *future Punishment* reserved for the *Wicked*.

For we can no way reconcile the present promiscuous Administration of human Affairs with the Justice and Goodness of God without the supposition of a *future Punishment* for the *Wicked*, as well as *Reward* for the *Righteous*. Who can believe that an infinitely holy and righteous Being governs the World, if he never make a greater difference than now appears between *those that fear*, and *those that fear him not*? Nay, if he suffer the most hardened Sinners not only to prosper here, but to escape with final Impunity! If the most daring Transgressors of his Law not only so usually go to their Graves in peace, but have no after-reckoning to fear! Who would not in this case conclude, either that He who made the World has abandoned it to the wild Conduct of Chance; or, that vindictive Righteousness is no Perfection that belongs to his Nature. So that to doubt, whether there is a *Hell* for the *Wicked*, is in effect to doubt, whether there is a God that judges in the Earth.

But we actually find, that a righteous God does govern the World with the *Fear* of a *future Punishment*, as well as *Hope* of *future Reward*. Even the generality of the Heathen Nations of old (as deep as they

they were sunk into deplorable Ignorance) yet knew something of the righteous Judgment of God, *Rom. i. ult.* The natural Notices of his Sin-avenging Justice, and the consciousness of their own Guilt and Demerit, and the Impunity of many profligate Sinners, in this Life, led them to the expectation of an unseen and future Vengeance. Hence came all the Notions of their *Infernal Judges*, and the various *Punishments* they inflicted on Offenders, and of the wretched Place to which they were doomed, that were so generally diffused among the People, besides the clearer Sentiments entertained by their wisest and best Philosophers. And indeed, there are few parts of the present Infidel World it self, whose Inhabitants do not profess the expectation of a future Misery reserved for those whom they account Unrighteous and Ungodly. So that we may well reckon this among the common Notices of the Light of Nature that have the general Suffrage of Mankind, and which are obvious to any that will but impartially use their Reason and Consideration in this important matter.

Since then God does actually govern the World by these Fears, we may justly infer, there is a *Reality* in the *Object* of them. For a God of infinite Truth will never govern the World by a gross Delusion; nor does he need any Falshood and Deceit to awe them into Obedience.

'Tis true indeed, the Light of Nature does not give us any certainty concerning either the *Nature* or the *Duration* of that *Punishment*. Though it does lead us to a probable Conjecture, That as the Soul of Man has the chiefest hand in our Sins, it will be the chief Subject of Punishment; and that the Punishment may, for any thing we know, be as durable as the immortal Spirit that suffers it.

2. We have the fullest Assurance we can expect, not only of such a *Punishment* in general, but of its *dreadful Nature* and *endless Duration* from the Light of supernatural Revelation.

And indeed, 'tis from thence we must derive the most convincing and satisfying *Certainty* about it. And accordingly, I have already shewn you, what the Scripture reveals concerning the *Nature* and the *Duration* of it.

I know indeed, as to the *latter* of these, many have taken great Pains, if possible, to strain those Expressions of the Holy Scriptures to a milder sense, which assert the *Eternity* of the *Wicked's Punishment*. And there are two ways they insist on to pervert those Passages that speak most fully to this purpose.

First, Some interpret those Passages that assert the *Eternity* of their *Punishment*, only concerning the long *Duration* of it. Because such a long *Duration*, though only *finite*, is often represented by the like Expressions. As when God promises that *the Sons of Aaron should minister to him for ever*, *1 Chron. xxii. 13.* That *the Laws be delivered by Moses to the Jews should be observed by them for ever*. And since these Phrases only denote a *considerable*, but not a *perpetual* Continuance, they would infer that there is no necessity of putting a harsher Construction on them, when applied to the *future Misery* of the *Wicked*.

But how groundless this Inference is, will easily appear if we consider,

1. In the Places fore-quoted and other parallel ones, the meaning of the Expressions is in a great measure determined by the *Nature* of the Thing spoken. Thus the *Priesthood* of *Aaron* and the *Laws* of *Moses*, could not possibly continue longer than the World lasted; nay, nor longer than the *Jews* were continued as God's peculiar People, and distinguished as *such* from the rest of the World. So that the *Nature* of the Thing plainly limited the sense of those Expressions that speak of their *continuing for ever*. But here there is nothing in the *Nature* of this *Punishment* that should thus limit the *Duration* of it; especially when the Subject (*viz.* the *Immortal Spirit* of *Man*) is capable of it, and when the *Eternity* of this

Punishment is represented to us in the greatest variety of Expressions that the Original Languages can well admit of, to denote a truly endless *Duration*.

2. The *Eternity* of the *Wicked's Punishment* is every where in Scripture opposed to the *Eternity* of the *Reward* and *Blessedness* of the *Righteous*.

So that by all just Rules of Interpretation, the *Duration* of the one must run parallel to that of the other. Thus here in the Text, *The Everlasting Punishment of the Wicked* is opposed to the *Eternal Life* of the *Righteous*. as 'tis an *Unmovable Kingdom* which the *Righteous* are called to inherit, so 'tis *Everlasting Fire* which the *Wicked* are adjudged to, *Heb. xii. 28. Matth. xxv. 41.* If the happy State of the one be called *Eternal Salvation*, so is that of the other *Everlasting Damnation* and *Destruction*, *Heb. v. 9. 2 Thes. i. 8. Mark iii. 29.* Shall the one be *for ever with the Lord*, so shall the other for ever depart from him, and become the cursed *Associates of the Devil and his Angels*. What reason can there then be, why we should affix so different a sense to the very same Phrases when applied to the *Joys of Heaven* and to the *Torments of Hell*? If therefore we think it undoubted, that those Expressions, when applied to the *former*, do import a truly endless Continuance, and that from the plain force of the Expressions themselves, as applied to a Subject capable of such Immortality; why should we question the sense of them when applied to the *latter*? For sure an immortal Spirit, is as truly capable of being miserable as of being happy for ever. If any here object, that this sense of the Expressions is inconsistent with the *Justice* or *Goodness* of God, the Consideration of that *Objection* will fall under another Head.

Secondly, Others do indeed own the *Punishment* of the *Wicked* to be some way *Eternal*, because they suppose it to be only by way of *Annihilation*, or a perpetual *Extinction* of their *Being* and *Life*. And they tell us, 'tis therefore called *Everlasting Destruction* or *Perdition*, because they shall thereby cease to be for ever.

Answ. This Opinion offers as great Violence to the Expressions of the Scripture as the former.

For those Expressions generally import such a *Punishment* as the Sufferers continually feel, and consequently such a one as supposes the Continuance of their *Being* and *Life*. They are here in the Text said to go away into *everlasting Punishment*, which implies their subsisting while they undergo it. And that *Punishment* it self is elsewhere represented under the Notion of a *Worm that never dies*, and a *Fire that never goes out*, to imply the positive Misery of it, *Mark ix. 42, &c.* Nay, in the *Place* or *State* to which the *Wicked* are adjudged, our Lord tells us, *There shall be weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth*, *Matth. xxiv. 51.* to import to us the quick and cutting sense of that extreme Misery. The rich Man is supposed in our Saviour's Parable to live in that *place of Torment*, and to be tortured in that *Infernal Flame*, *Luke xvi. 23, 24.* And as this Conceit is plainly irreconcilable with the obvious sense of these and manifold other parallel Passages of Scripture; so it seems no less to clash with the Doctrine of the Soul's Immortality, and must necessarily suppose that the Soul of Man either is not capable of, or at least not designed by God for a perpetual *Duration*. An Opinion that the more learned Heathens disclaimed, and much more should professed Christians be ashamed of. So that if we will believe the plain Account which these inspired Writings give us, we must be convinced of this important Truth, and can hardly admit any doubt about it without weakening their Divine Authority.

Having considered the *Certainty*, I proceed,

Secondly, To consider the *Justice* and *Equity* of it.

For Sinners are prone to quarrel with the Threatnings of God, and arraign the righteousness of his Sentence, in making *Eternal Misery* the *Punishment* of the *transient Acts of Sin*. This their proud Minds are

apt to swell against as an unreasonable Rigour, and unjustifiable Severity. They are ready to think the *Punishment* is far above the *Nature* and *Deserts* of so inconsiderable *Faults* as they take their most aggravated Transgressions to be; at least, they cannot be persuaded that 'tis consistent with his *Goodness* and *Mercy* to inflict it.

'Tis true indeed, if we did reason of these Matters with the Humility and Modesty that becomes us, we should argue quite contrary, That since a God of unexceptionable *Justice* and *Equity* has threatned the *Wicked* with *Eternal Misery*, sure there must be such an unconceivable *Malignity* in *Sin*, as bears a due Proportion to so dreadful a *Punishment*, Gen. xviii. 25.

But in order to the taking off the force of this Objection against the Doctrine I have delivered, I shall briefly suggest the following Particulars.

1. The *Evil* and *Demerit* of *Sin* is not to be measured by the *Time* in which it is committed.

'Tis evidently so in *human Laws*, and in the *Penalties* they denounce. That Crime may be committed in a *day*, in an *hour*, nay, in a few *minutes*, that shall justly expose a Man to perpetual *Imprisonment*, or *Exile*, nay, that shall for ever deprive the Offender of his *Life*, and all his *Posterity* of the *Estate* and *Honour* that otherwise would have descended to them. And this, without the least *Imputation* upon the *Equity* of those *Laws*. And no wonder, when a Man may in a little *Time* do that *Mischief* that none of his *Sufferings* can repair, and which the utmost *Severity* of publick *Justice* bears no *Inequality* to. As in case of a Man's *assassinating* an excellent *Prince*, *attempting* to betray his *Country*, &c. And if the desert of Offences against human *Laws* is not to be judged of by the *Time* wherein they were committed, much less can we measure hereby the demerit of our wilful Violations of the *Law* of *God*.

2. The *Demerit* of *Mens Sins* is unconceivably aggravated by the *infinite Majesty* against whom they are committed, and by the *Obligations* they are under to *Obedience*.

The greatness of the Offence in the just Estimation of human *Laws* is much enhanced by the *Dignity* of the *Person* against whom it is committed; to affront or injure an *Equal*, is criminal and punishable, but much more to do it to a *Master*, a *Parent*, a *Magistrate*, nay, a *Sovereign Prince*, heightens the guilt in proportion to the *Eminency* and *Superiority* of the injured *Party*. So far then as the desert of *Sin* is to be measured by the *Excellency* and *Dignity* of him at whose *Honour* and *Authority* the Offence strikes: It must be unspeakably great, as committed against a Being of *infinite Perfections* and *supreme Dominion*; especially when we consider that *Sinners*, in their innumerable Transgressions, violate those Bonds of *Duty* which not only the *sovereign Authority* but *matchless Goodness* of *God* has laid upon them. They transgress his *Commands*, from whose *Power* they have derived their *Beings*, by whose *Care* their *Lives* are preserved, by whose *Bounty* they are sustained, and to whose undeserved *Favour* they owe all that they are and have. They counteract all the reasonable *Inducements* to *Obedience* that are presented to them from the *Excellency* and *Equity*, the *Purity* and *Goodness* of the *Laws* of *God*; and from the *Promise* of great and eternal *Rewards*. So that we cannot conceive any Offences attended with higher *Aggravations*, and consequently deserving of *severer Punishment*.

3. *Impenitent Sinners* would transgress for ever, if they were for ever continued in a State of *Trial*, and their *Malignity* against *God* does continue for ever.

Even *Designs* of *Wickedness*, where they are discovered by any *Overt-Acts*, are justly punished by human *Laws*, though the intended Crimes were not fully accomplished. As in the case of *treasonable Con-*

spiracies; though never executed. How justly then may a righteous *God*, in his *Judgment*, have a regard to the *Intentions* of *Men*, and punish those for ever that had a rooted *Propension* to *Sin* for ever? To this purpose *St. Augustin* argued, *When a Man dies impenitently in his Sins, he thereby evidently shows, that he would still have sinned, if he had lived so that Death rather puts an end to his Life than to his Sins.* And *Jerome* reasons in the same manner, *The Wicked shall therefore be endlessly punished, because they would have endlessly sinned, if they could have endlessly lived.*

And it strengthens the Argument to consider, That the damned still retain and act the *Malignity* of their *Hearts* against *God*, while they suffer his righteous *Vengeance*. How equal is it then that he should be as inflexible in his *Justice* as they are incorrigible in their *Enmity*; and that those who remain *insuperably wicked* should be *remedilessly miserable*! As this seems to be the real Case of the *fallen Angels*.

4. No less than the *Threatning* of an *Eternal Punishment* was sufficient to restrain *Men* from their *Sins*.

Since *Man* is in a State of *Trial*, it was congruous to the *Wisdom* of *God*, that he should annex such a *Sanction* to his *Laws*, as was most proper and likely to maintain their *Authority* and *Force*, and deter *Men* from the obstinate and bold *Violation* of them. Now, since the *Threats* of eternal *Misery* it self prove to so many, through their daring *Presumption*, so weak a *Fence* to secure the *Laws* of *God* from their *Contempt*, and so incapable, in their blinded *Judgment*, to counter-balance the present *Advantages* and *Pleasures* of *Sin*; how feeble and insignificant a *Check* would the denunciation of some short-lived *Misery* have been, when so many venture upon foreseen eternal *Vengeance*! And as the *Wisdom* of *God* required that his *Laws* should have so awful and solemn a *Sanction*, so his *Truth* and *Veracity* require the certain *Execution* of it.

5. This *Everlasting Punishment* is the *Sinners* own choice.

Impenitent Transgressors are not surpris'd into *Hell* without being foretold of their danger, and solemnly cautioned to avoid it. *Blessing* and *Cursing*, *Everlasting Life* and *Death*, are plainly set before them, Deut. xxx. 19. And if the *Punishment* was so terrible, why would they so resolutely venture upon it? Since they chose *Death* and *Hell*, by wilfully choosing the *Paths* that lead thereto, why should not the *Justice* of *God* give them their own voluntary *Option*? They foreknew the endless *Misery* that would be the result of a sinful *Life*; and yet, rather than quit the momentary *Pleasures* of *Sin*, they would rush upon it; they foresaw the *Vengeance* of eternal *Fire*, and yet with open *Eyes* they cast themselves into it; and what *Obligation* can we suppose to lye on the *Justice* of *God* to prevent their endless *Ruin*, when they are so desperately bent upon it?

6. The endless *Punishment* of the *Wicked* is in a great measure (if not wholly) the *natural Result* and *Fruit* of their own *Wickedness*.

The *Soul* of *Man* is by its *spiritual Nature* and *Constitution* framed for a perpetual *Duration*. 'Tis here in a State of *Trial*, and the *Wisdom* of *God* has so contrived the matter, that a *Man's* present *Temper* and *Course* lays the certain *Foundation* of his future *Happiness* or *Misery*. So that the *Justice* of *God* seems to have little else to do, than leave perverse *Sinners* to the *natural Consequences* of their own *Crimes*. As will appear in considering the several *Branches* of the *Punishment* of *Sinners*.

One part of their *Punishment* is their *Exclusion* from the glorious *Presence* of *God*, and from the *Society* and *Privileges* of the *Blessed*. Now, this they evidently bring upon themselves, by their own moral *Incapacity* for the blessedness of the heavenly State. What satisfaction could they relish in the presence of that blessed *God*, to whose holy *Nature* they bear the deepest

deepest Aversion, and whom they cannot look upon without that Trembling and Horror that the sense of their Guilt creates! What pleasure could they find in the converse of those glorified Saints, and in their divine Employments and Joys, to whose Society, and to whose spiritual Exercises and Delights here they had no Inclination! So that to a brutify'd Sinner no Society could be more unwelcome. To him even that *Mansion of the Blessed* would be but a place of Torment, through the disagreeableness of his vile and debased Temper to that pure and refined State. Can there be any Injustice then in banishing him from that Society and Work he never loved, and is no way suited in his Disposition to? Can it be unequal, that they that say to God now, *Depart from us, &c.* should then hear from him, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, for ever?*

One part of the Misery of the damned will result from the Malignity of their own Nature. There needs little more than the height of their own hellish Dispositions to make them as wretched as they are vile and hateful Creatures. And who can arraign the Justice of God for giving up those entirely to their own Lusts, who have so long resisted all Attempts of his Grace for their Conversion?

Another part of the Misery of the damned consists in the *Rage of their own unsatisfied Desires*. And this they plainly bring on themselves. They have kindled those impure Flames of insatiable, carnal and brutish, sordid and earthly Inclinations and Desires, in which they are now tormented, because they find in the future State no Fuel to feed and satisfy them.

Another and chief Ingredient of the Misery of the damned lies in the *Agonies and Horrors of an accusing Conscience*. Now, 'tis by their own wicked Actions that they have sown these Seeds of bitter Anguish and Remorse. 'Tis by their multiplied Provocations they have given their Consciences those deadly Wounds, that shall for ever bleed and smart afresh. 'Tis the remembrance of their own inexcusable but wilful Folly and Wickedness, that supplies Food to the Worm that never dies, and Fuel to the unquenchable Fire. 'Tis they have arm'd an enraged Conscience (to which they had long offer'd the most unsufferable Violence) with those envenomed Darts (I mean those cutting Challenges and Reflexions) wherewith it will pierce and sting their Hearts for ever. And can we imagine it any Injustice in God, to let loose an accusing Conscience upon them, and to abandon them to its Fury and Despair?

In a word, who can with any reason pretend to censure the Equity of God's righteous Judgment, in thus leaving a perverse Sinner to the Misery which he brings on himself, even to the terrible Woe of *Eating the Fruit of his own doing?* Isa. iii. 11. So that as far as we can conceive of the Punishment of the Wicked, they are themselves the chief Agents in it, and have no tolerable ground of Complaint, unless they could suppose God in Justice and Goodness obliged to prevent, by a Miracle, the bitter Fruits of their wilful Disobedience, the natural but deadly Consequences of their own final Impenitency. As if a Man that should knowingly drink a delicious Poison, should quarrel with the Justice or Goodness of God, because he did not, by a Miracle, prevent its causing such violent and acute Pains, and proving mortal and pernicious to him.

It now remains that we improve this Subject.

And,

I. I have already hence urged all of you to frequent Meditation upon this awful Subject, *The Eternal Punishment of the Wicked*.

II. Let me hence expostulate with careless Sinners about their stupid Security, while they are in daily hazard of being remedilessly exposed to this Eternal Punishment.

And may I not justly fear that this is the real Case of many of you, Are there none among us that go

on in an open Course of Ungodliness and Unrighteousness? Are there none here that live in indulged Gluttony or Drunkenness, Lying and Falshood, Fraud or Oppression, Uncleaness and brutish Lust, Swearing and Cursing, woful mispence of precious Time, in gross Ignorance, in inordinate Covetousness, or voluptuous Sensuality? Are there none that live in the daily neglect of all the Duties of Family and Closet-Religion? Are there not some here that are entire Strangers to such spiritual Exercises as Reading, Praying, Meditating, serious Self-Trial and Religious Conference? Are none here that slothfully bide the Talents of their Lord, and whose Conversation is barren of all those holy Fruits which Christianity should produce? Are there none whose Hearts are wretchedly alienated from the Fear and Love of God, and from all serious Converses with him? Alas! I fear there are many of you whose Consciences would readily charge you with the guilt of such allowed Wickedness, if you did but impartially consult them, and give them leave to pass Judgment on your Actions upon a faithful and narrow Search!

And if you truly fall under the Character of the Wicked, how comes it that you can so often read and hear of that *Eternal Punishment* to which all such shall be adjudged, and yet never be affected with the Thoughts of it, never tremble at the certain Prospect of it, nay, that you can go on in your sensual Jollity as fearless and unconcerned as if no such tremendous Vengeance and Misery hung over your guilty Heads!

Sure there can be no other Account given of your wretched Security, but either you never think of that *Eternal Punishment*, or do not believe the Truth of it; or that you think it so tolerable an Evil, that the present Pleasures and Advantages of Sin will justify your running the risk of it; or you hope to escape that future Punishment, though you continue your present wicked Life.

I. If your Security arises from your wilful Inconsideration of it, I must refer you to what has been suggested under the first general Use; and shall only subjoin, Why has God given thee thy thinking Powers, if not to foresee and consider the Issues of this momentary Life in a near and awful Eternity! What canst thou employ thy Thoughts upon, that is of greater necessity and importance? Dost thou every day stand on the brink of Eternal Misery, and wilt thou wilfully shut thine Eyes upon it? Art thou forewarned of an Eternal Abyss of Horror and Despair, which for any thing thou knowst thou mayst sink into before one Day or Week, or Year more pass over thy Head; and wilt thou not once consider, whether the danger be real, and such as deserves thy utmost care to avoid? Wilt thou in wilful Blindness madly run upon the fatal Precipice? O amazing and inexcusable, (nay, I had almost said) incredible and unconceivable Folly!

II. Or does your Security arise from your not believing that there is such a future Punishment reserved for the Wicked?

And have you any solid ground for your resolved Infidelity? Or can you reasonably expect any clearer Evidence than you already have concerning the reality of that future Punishment?

1. Have you any solid ground for your resolved Infidelity?

Can you indeed demonstrate by solid Arguments the Truth of what the Fool hath said in his Heart, *There is no God?* Psal. xiv. 1. Or can you prove that perfect Holiness and Justice belong not to his Nature; That he does not extremely abhor your Sins, and will never punish them with dreadful Severity? Alas! the boldest Atheists and Infidels cannot pretend to demonstrate any such Matter. And indeed, how should they do it? Not from the *Light of Nature*, for that, as I have shewn, dictates the contrary; Not from the *Holy Scriptures*, for those abundantly confirm

confirm and clear these contrary Dictates of *Natural Light*.

So that all that secure Sinners generally pretend to is only this, That they cannot believe a merciful God will ever inflict so terrible a Punishment, and make his own Creatures miserable for ever.

To which I need only give this short Answer, 'Tis true, indeed, there is unconceivable and infinite Goodness and Pity in the ever blessed God. But 'tis as true on the other hand, That the Exercise of God's Mercy, in respect of the Objects thereof, is limited by his other Perfections. And therefore he will never exert it to the dishonour and injury of his Wisdom or Sovereignty, his Holiness and Justice. For the Mercy of God would cease to be a Perfection of his Nature; it would degenerate into *foolish Pity*, if it should extend it self to an *unfit* and (morally) *incapable Object*, I mean an *incorrigible Sinner*. For in this case the Exercise of it would stain the glory of his Justice, and cast contempt on his Authority and Government. So that unless *Justice* and *Clemency* (which are so easily consistent in *human Government*) be inconsistent in the *Divine*, the boundless Mercy of God can be no Security to a finally impenitent Sinner, from the terrible Effects of his incensed Justice. If a merciful Judge may yet (without any prejudice to that Character) condemn a notorious *Robber* or *Murderer*, so may a compassionate God adjudge to deserved Punishment every obstinate and irreclaimable Rebel against his Authority and Laws. And accordingly, the blessed God, who so frequently asserts his own infinite Pity, yet notwithstanding forewarns Sinners of the dreadful Consequences of their final Impenitency from his provoked Justice. He declares, indeed, That *he has no pleasure in the death of the Wicked*; and yet he no less positively assures him, That if he continue so *he shall die*, *Ezek. xviii. 20.* compared with the two last Verses. He that, to returning Sinners, is the *God of all grace*, is, to hardened and obstinate Ones, a *Consuming Fire*, *1 Pet. v. 10. Heb. xii. ult.* He that proclaims himself a *God gracious and merciful, long-suffering and abundant in goodness*, yet will by no means *clear the* (impenitently) *guilty*, *Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.* 'Tis a sufficient demonstration of the Mercy of God, that he has so long *by the riches of his forbearance and goodness endeavoured to lead perverse Sinners to Repentance*, *Rom. ii. 4.* and done so much to *overcome their evil with his good*. But he has plainly forewarned us, That the continued Abuse of his Patience and Pity will consign us into the hands of his inexorable Justice; and whom the Bowels of his Pity will not *melt and draw*, the Flames of his Vengeance will *seize and devour*. So that unless we will perversely expect that God will exert his Mercy to the reproach of his other Perfections, *nay*, in contradiction to the Truth of his declared Threatnings, Sinners can draw no reasonable Argument from thence to dis-believe the Truth and Reality of this future Punishment.

2. Nay, I add farther, Can you reasonably expect any clearer Evidence than what you have already concerning the Reality of this Eternal Punishment of the Wicked?

I have already, in part, suggested to you what the Light of Nature dictates; and for the Holy Scriptures, this great Truth is there written in the most clear and legible Characters. A *miserable*, as well as *happy Immortality* is there clearly *brought to Light*, *2 Tim. i. 10.* So that none can pretend Ignorance or Doubt concerning it, who will but consult those Oracles of Divine Truth. And how satisfying Evidence we have of their Divine Original and Authority, I have formerly, at large, shewn you. And we may justly demand, what farther Evidence can perverse Sinners reasonably desire to convince them of

the *Reality and Certainty* of that future Punishment? Would you have a *Messenger* sent to you from that Place of Torment? Would you have one of your former Companions in Sin, come again to warn you of the Truth of that future Punishment? As to that, I might indeed justly tell you, That there have not wanted some credible and awful Instances of such deceased Sinners as have appeared to their surviving Acquaintance and told them, *There was a terrible and sin-avenging God, and they now felt it.* But I must rather choose to suggest to you, That such Expectations are unreasonable: Every other Sinner may equally pretend to the same Privilege, of having a Messenger from the other World to warn him. But no such Messenger could be so worthy of Credit, or produce so authentick Credentials of a Divine Mission as Jesus Christ. So that if those that *will not believe Moses and the Prophets*, we may much more say, Those who will not believe the incarnate Son of God, *neither would they be persuaded though one should rise from the dead*, *Luke xvi. 30, 31.*

Or would you be carried into that Place of Torment? Would you for a while *feel* the Misery of the damned, to *convince* you of the *reality* of it? 'Tis easily answered, That this Expectation is no less unreasonable. God would have our Conversion to him to be a matter of rational Choice. He therefore thinks fit we should *walk by Faith*, and not by actual *Sight* of the Invisible World. For 'tis probable that the actual Sight thereof would so irresistibly determine us to Holiness, as not to leave our Choice thereof a free and rewardable Action. Such actual Discoveries of that Unseen State would be therefore unsuitable to our present State of Trial, and what it were no way congruous to the Wisdom of God to allow us. And yet as to that, we do not want in the deplorable case of many despairing Sinners on Earth, a lively Emblem and View of the Miseries of the damned. We may in the restless Agonies and Horrors of those, *for whom there remains nothing but a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation*, *Heb. x. 27.* behold a true *Landskip of Hell*, and form some Apprehensions concerning their doleful State who feel the *Stings* of the *Immortal Worm*, and the *Rage* of the *Unquenchable Fire*. We may in the insufferable Anguish of their wounded Spirits, learn how dismal it is to be abandoned to remediless Desperation. For if a few drops of Divine Wrath as it were shed into the Consciences of awakened Sinners here raise such Alarms of Terror and Fear, of Remorse and Rage, what unconceivable Woes will overwhelm those forsaken Souls on whom the full Storms of Divine Indignation are poured out for ever! And if all this will not persuade Sinners concerning the reality of that future Punishment, God will use no other means for their Conviction. Let them dis-believe it at their Peril. What they will not now believe, there is no remedy but that they must *ever long* for ever feel. But, alas! how dismal is their Case, who will not open their Eyes till they *lift them up in the Place of Torment*! Whom nothing but woful Experience will satisfy! Who are resolved to stop their Ears till the awful Summons of God sound a terrible Alarm into them! Who will not credit the Torments of Hell till they are plunged into them, past all possibility and hope of Redemption! But let me tell you, whatever *Infidels* there are on Earth, there are none in Hell. Even the *Devils believe and tremble*, *James ii. 9.* But, alas! there their Belief and Conviction comes too late to put them into any Capacity of remedying their forlorn Condition. And your Conviction of it will come too late, when there is no more place for Repentance, no more hope or possibility of escaping from that *Wrath that will then come upon you to the uttermost*.

S E R M O N XVI.

On the Torments of *HELL*.

Matth. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.



HAVE already in treating on the former Branch of the Text, considered,

I. Who those are on whom the Punishment mentioned shall be executed, viz. the *Wicked*, as opposed to the *Righteous*. Of whom see the Character and Description,

P. 251, 252, &c.

II. What that Punishment is, which they shall be adjudged to.

III. I shewed the *Certainty* and *Equity* of this future Punishment.

I then came to the Application of this Subject. And,

I. I have already urged all of you to frequent Meditations on this awful Subject, *The Eternal Punishment of the Wicked*; and that from several Considerations.

II. Hence therefore I would expostulate with careless Sinners about their stupid Security, while they are in daily hazard of being remedilessly exposed to this dreadful Punishment.

To that end I would propose the following Questions to them;

First, Does your Security arise from your wilful Inconsideration of it?

Secondly, Does your Security arise from your not believing that there is such a future endless Punishment for the Wicked?

And here I shewed the Unreasonableness of such Grounds of your present Security.

I now proceed to enquire farther,

Thirdly, Does your Security arise from hence, That you look on that future Punishment as so tolerable an Evil, that you will rather run the risk of it, than abandon the momentary Advantages and Pleasures of a sinful Life?

If so, sure I need do no more to convince you of the Folly of this Plea, than to lay before you, *What it is you run the hazard of, and, For what you do it, and to desire you would impartially set the one in balance against the other.*

I. I beseech you consider well, *What it is that you run the hazard of by a sinful Life?*

Alas, miserable Wretch! what art thou? A despicable Worm that tremblest at every shadow and appearance of bodily danger, that ever thou shouldst think of contending with the Almighty Power of an incensed God, or of bearing the weight of his terrible

Indignation for ever! Dost thou not know that 'tis a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, when he comes as a Righteous Judge, to avenge all the obstinate Violations of his holy Laws? *Heb. x. 31*, Dost thou think it indeed so inconsiderable an Evil to be doom'd to depart from him for ever? To be thus eternally cut off from the Fountain of Light and Life, of Love and Joy! To be thrust out of the Kingdom of God, and sent from those Mansions of Light, into that Prison of Eternal Darkness, where no Ray of Divine Favour, no Glimpse of comfortable Hope shall ever shine upon, or revive thy forsaken and forlorn Soul! Is it so tolerable a thing to be continually pursued with the Terrors of Divine Wrath, and with the bitter Reproaches of an enraged Conscience! To feel the Stings of the Immortal Worm, and the Fury of the Unquenchable Fire! Or to burn for ever in the impure Flames of thy own insatiable Lusts! Is it so tolerable to be reduced into those Circumstances in which, where-ever thou turnest thy self, thou wilt be surrounded with Objects that can administer nothing but Matter of Horror and Anguish to thy Mind? The Review of Time that is past will bring all thy Wickedness and Folly to thy remembrance. And the Prospect of a durable but wretched Eternity, will be far more dismal and intolerable. Thou wilt not be able to look up to God, or Heaven, or the glorified Inhabitants of that blessed Place with any other Eyes than those of Envy and Despair. An unpassable Gulph is fix'd, that bars all hope of regaining that Lost Paradise. And, alas! with what satisfaction canst thou then look on thy Associates in Sin and Punishment, the very sight of whom will only serve to revive the Memory of thy guilt, and thereby heighten thy Misery. And is this (O Sinner!) the deplorable and dreadful State that thou art so forward to venture upon, and so resolved to run the desperate hazard of? O amazing Distraction and Madness of hardened and presumptuous Sinners! No words can sufficiently express such extreme and desperate Folly. Sure, if they were not given up to a reprobate Mind, one serious Thought of that future endless Misery should make them cry out with the most anxious Concern and Fear, *Who can dwell with that devouring Fire? Who can dwell with those everlasting Burnings? Isa. xxxiii. 14.*

But,

2. I beseech you consider farther, *For what you are willing to run this dreadful hazard?*

X x

And

And indeed we may well stand amazed to consider, upon what sorry Inducements and Motives deluded Sinners are drawn to expose themselves to so unconceivable danger. 'Tis almost hard to say, what it is they propose to themselves to encourage them in their vile Course, when so terrible and certain Consequences of it are so plainly set before their Eyes.

For, alas! I know no better Account of the Matter than this: The Sinner thinks it a desirable thing to live here without the fear of God, and without the restraint and control of his Laws. He would walk after the Imagination of his own Heart, and live as he lists. He would enjoy the Liberty to curse and swear, to drink and whore, to revel and rant as often as he pleases. He would spend his Time either in restless Toil, to grasp at worldly Honours or Riches, or in continual Pursuit of sensual Delights and carnal Jollity. He would baulk no Sin that is either conducive to his worldly Interests, or tends to the gratification of his brutish Appetites and Lusts. And in the mean time, he would live free from the secret strict Exercises of serious Religion, from Praying, Reading, Meditating, &c. He would entirely cast off all the troublesome Thoughts of his Soul and his Eternal State. And for the imaginary satisfaction of such a Life as this he seems resolved to run the hazard of that Eternal Punishment he is foretold and forewarned of. And this I truly think is the most plausible Account that can be given of it.

I might indeed here clearly shew, how very base and vile, nay, how truly miserable and wretched that ungodly Life is now, which Sinners thus violently dote upon; but that being alien from my present Subject, I shall only in the

3. And last place, beseech such Sinners to consider, *What proportion the present Advantages or Pleasures of a sinful Life bear to the forementioned miserable and eternal Consequences of it?*

And sure, if you have any Sense or sober Consideration, left, we may leave the Matter to your own Consciences; for 'tis easy to foresee which way the Ballance must turn, if an impartial Judgment hold the Scale. Let it then be supposed that you do enjoy all the momentary Pleasures that Sin can possibly yield, can these ever countervail the Loss of Eternal Joys, or can they compensate for the Suffering of Endless Torments? Let it be supposed, That by finning you could gain the whole World, what would that signify to make up the irreparable Loss of an Immortal Soul, for which nothing of equal Value can be given in Exchange? Mark viii. 36, 37. I say, to repair the Loss of a precious Soul, that has an Eternity of Happiness or Misery to expect when this World shall be at an end, and when we can enjoy it no more for ever. Alas, Sinner! what is there in the transient Pleasures of Drink and Lust, of brutish Excess and extravagant Mirth, that can justify thee in exposing thy self to the terrible Wrath of a Sin-avenging God, and to the perpetual Stings of a guilty Conscience! Dost thou not buy that delusive Dream of short-liv'd and imaginary Delight in Sin (for 'tis really no more) at a very dear rate, which is like to cost thee no less than weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth for ever? Is that present Laughter of Fools so desirable, that shall end in eternal and unpitied Mourning, Luke vi. 25. Nay, were the present Joys of Sin equal to those of Heaven (which yet it were mere madness to suppose) yet there were no comparison to be made between Time and Eternity, between a few fleeting Years and a permanent endless Duration. Who then would ever venture on a Life of Sin, that foresees the undoubted but lamentable Issues of it? Who would, for its despicable Advantages, barter away the Pearl of Price? Who would, for its deceitful and perishing Delights, sow those Seeds of Horror and Remorse in his own Conscience, which, without deep Repentance, will spring up into everlasting Anguish and Desperation? Alas, miserable

Sinners! could I represent to you what the damned now feel; could you but realize to your own Souls, what they think of their past wicked Life, and much more what they suffer for it; could I take the Covering from Hell, and give you a lively View of the unspeakable Misery of undone and despairing Souls; I doubt not but you would reject your most beloved Sins with the utmost Abhorrence; and the strongest Temptations to return to them would have as little force upon you, as if a Man should, with the offer of a despicable Trifle, persuade you to leap down a dreadful Precipice, or to throw down your selves into the devouring Flames. For indeed, 'tis a far more foolish Bargain than this that the Devil makes with you, when he prevails upon you with the Bait of unlawful Gain, or impure Pleasure, to run the risk of utter Perdition, and venture upon the Vengeance of Eternal Fire. O suffer not then a reasonable Soul to be so easily cheated into endless and remediless Ruin. But I would farther enquire,

Fourthly, Does your Security arise from hence, That you hope some way or other to escape that future Punishment, though you still persist in your present sinful Course?

If you entertain such a wretched Hope, it must be upon one of these two Suppositions; either that you think you can escape by making some other amends to the Justice of God without leaving your Sins, or at least you think to retain your Sins till you come to Age, or to a Death-Bed; and then you presume, by a late Repentance, to prevent this terrible Doom.

Now, both these Suppositions are very unreasonable.

1. 'Tis unreasonable to hope you can escape the Justice of God, by making some other amends to it without leaving your Sins.

For both the positive Declarations of the word of God, and the Nature of the Thing itself, should prevent your deluding your selves with such groundless Hopes.

The positive Declarations of the Word of God should do it.

How expressly does the blessed God charge the Prophet to denounce this irreversible Doom against the incorrigibly wicked, *Say to the Wicked, It shall be ill with him, for the Reward of his hands shall be given him*, Isa. iii. 11. How peremptory is the Language of our Saviour, *Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish*, Luke xiii. 3. And his Apostles speak in the same positive Strain, *If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die*, Rom. viii. 13. *Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish upon every Soul of Man that doeth evil*, Rom. vi. 8, 9. But what need I cite particular Passages, when this is the genuine Purport and Scope of so great a part of the Bible.

And the Nature of the Thing plainly demonstrates the Folly of such Hopes.

For since the Punishment of the Wicked is (as I have shewn) in so great a measure the natural Result of their Wickedness it self, unless the Cause be removed, the mischievous Effects will follow; unless the Distemper be healed, it will in the issue produce dolorous and deadly Agonies. An unholy Soul can never inherit the Glory and Blessedness of that heavenly State, which it is by its own moral Incapacity wholly indisposed for. It cannot be otherwise than most hateful to a God of infinite Purity, and an Object of his righteous Aversion for ever. And in the future State the remembrance of its past guilt cannot but cause terrible Convulsions in an awakened Conscience; and its own unsatisfied Lusts, and tormenting Passions, will leave it for ever wretched and miserable. So that the righteous Sentence of God against the Wicked, is very much founded in the natural Tendency of their Wickedness it self, (as I had occasion before more largely to shew.)

How vain then is it for a deluded Sinner to think that future Punishment can be escaped on easier Terms

Terms than those of abandoning his beloved Sins by a sincere Conversion to God. Alas, miserable Sinner! couldst thou bring thousands of Rams; or ten thousand Rivers of Oil, shouldst thou give the Fruit of thy Body for the Sin of thy Soul, Micah vi. 6, &c. all these Gifts would signify nothing to bribe the inflexible Justice of God, or to prevent the Misery of an un sanctified Soul. Nor will the frequency of external Devotions, or the multitude of thy Prayers, Isa. i. 12, &c. thy frequenting the House of God, or sitting down at his Table, prevent thy Rejection by him, if thou art found a Worker of Iniquity, Matth. vii. 21, &c. Much less will apocryphal Austerities and Pennance, or a little hypocritical Alms, though joined with the Priest's Absolution, protect thee from that Wrath of God, that is revealed from Heaven against all Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men, Rom. i. 18. There's nothing short of an unfeigned Renunciation of thy Sins can prevent their proving thy Eternal Ruin.

2. Nor is it less unreasonable to presume, that though thou continuest in thy sinful Course at present, yet 'tis time enough to prevent that Eternal Punishment by a late Repentance, when old Age, or when Sickness or Death comes upon thee.

To represent the Folly hereof, I shall not suggest, much less insist on, all the Considerations which this copious Argument would afford. I shall rather content my self with this general one, viz. that 'tis so far from being then time enough to prevent this dreadful Doom, that the prevention of it is then utterly implorable, and even next to impossible.

For the longer thou continuest thy sinful Course, thou dost the more to confirm thy vicious Habits, to stupify thy Conscience, and harden thy Heart, and to encrease the Difficulties of a sincere Repentance. And all this while thou art giving a just God the highest provocation to withdraw his forfeited Grace, and take from thee his grieved Spirit, and to abandon thee to the Tyranny of Satan, and to the Violence of thy own unruly Lusts. In the mean time thou knowest not how soon Death may surprise thee by a sudden Stroke; so that thou mayst be hurried into Eternity before thou hast any Time to prepare for it, and never have Leisure to open thine Eyes to look on thy spiritual Condition till thou livest them up in the Place of Torment. But, what though Death give thee some Warning, and make slower Approaches, what canst thou do under the Languors of a pained Body, and the Hurries and Distractions of a disturbed Mind? What can thy disordered Thoughts then contribute towards an entire Change in thy Nature? And with what Hope canst thou pray to God, that he would change thy Heart when thou hast no Time remaining to change thy Life? Or that he would pardon thy Sins, because thou now seemest willing to leave them, when thou couldst keep them no longer? Or that he would now save thee from Hell, though thou wouldst not think of returning till the last Gasps? That he would now prevent thy dying the Death, though thou hast resolutely all thy days lived the Life of the Wicked? How canst thou imagine that an infinitely wise and just God will regard such Prayers as these? But, alas! 'tis ten thousand to one, that either thou wilt die in a stupid Security as thou hast lived, or die in miserable Despair. Of all this I need only give this obvious reason from Experience, That the Instances of true Death-Bed Penitents are extremely rare, and 'tis questionable, whether there was ever any Instance at all of one that wilfully delay'd his Repentance, to that Time; whereas, there are Millions of Souls that have been cheated by this Pretence into Eternal Perdition. And is the prevention of so dreadful a danger as this to be put upon so hazardous, I had almost said, so hopeless an Issue? Would we run so mad a venture in any danger that threatened this Temporal Life? And is the Gulph of Eternal Ruin the only thing that we are so indifferent,

whether we escape or remedilessly sink into? Can we find nothing but the Vengeance of the Eternal God to play such desperate Prizes with? Are we then only for endeavouring to flee from that endless Misery, when we stand on the brink of it, and are irrecoverably dropping into it? What an height of stupendous and inexcusable Folly were this!

Or,

Lastly, Does your Security arise from your concluding, That you are not among the Number of the Wicked, against whom this Eternal Punishment is denounced?

Ans. If, indeed, you fall not under this Character, then the Sentence in my Text does not belong to you. But then let me tell you, That the Righteous, who shall escape this terrible Doom, do often entertain solicitous Thoughts about it, and cherish a cautious preventive Fear of it. So that a stupid Security is no good Argument of the safety of your Condition.

I must therefore desire you to be more diligent and impartial in examining your Hearts and Lives, that you may from your present Character judge what Doom you are to expect.

See then, whether you are not among the Number of the openly Wicked, against whom the Threatnings of this Eternal Punishment are directly levelled. Such as the Adulterers, Fornicators, Lyars, Thieves, Extortioners, Unrighteous and Fraudulent, Envious, Malicious, Revengeful, Unmerciful, Covetous, Irreligious and Ungodly, Cursers, Swearers, Profaners of God's holy Name or Day, &c. On all these Children of Disobedience the Wrath of God does abide, and without Repentance will unavoidably come. See 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. Col. iii. 5, 6. Rev. xix. 8.

Again, See whether you fall not under the Character of Hypocrites in Religion, who act their Wickedness under a Vizard and Mask of it, and who have nothing of Piety but the counterfeit Appearance and Shew. If you are not sincerely holy; If God and Heaven have not the prevalent Interest in your Hearts; If this World have the Ascendant there; If you live to your selves, and not to God; If you wilfully neglect the positive part of Holiness, To cloath the naked, and feed the hungry, &c. when you have Abilities and Opportunity for it. This will be sufficient to convict you of being wicked, and such to whom this terrible Doom belongs. (See what was said on the first Head in the doctrinal part of this Subject.

O let not then the Delusions of a self-flattering Heart tempt any of you to overlook your real danger, and neglect the timely prevention of it.

And now may we not suppose that the Consciences of some secure Sinners will be awakened to a serious Concern of fleeing from the Wrath to come? May we not hope that some will be putting that anxious Question that the trembling Jaylor did, Sirs, What shall I do to be saved? Acts xvii. 30. If this be the case of any, it will lead me in the

III. Place, To exhort and direct such convinced Sinners as see the danger they are in of this Eternal Punishment, to flee from it.

And if you ask me, what you should do in order thereto?

Ans. The Course you are to take lies plain before you; there's no great difficulty in understanding it. And, O that it were as easy to persuade your Hearts to it as to inform your Judgments about it.

If you would escape this Eternal Punishment,

1. You must by serious Repentance abandon the Paths of Sin that lead to it.

You must cease to be wicked, if you would not suffer the Doom and Punishment of such. The Wicked must forsake his Way, and the unrighteous Man his Thoughts, and turn unto the Lord, Isa. lv. 7. You must lay down the Enmity of your Hearts against God, and cease the wilful Disobedience of an ungodly and sensual Life, if you would not be exposed to the

the Vengeance that shall overtake his obstinate Adversaries. There must be a *renewing* Change in your *Nature*, and a truly *reforming* Change in your *Practice*.

In order hereto, you must deeply lament and abhor your past Wickedness; You must implore the efficacious Grace of God to turn the bent of your Hearts from Sin and from this World, to Himself and Holiness, and Heaven; You must follow your Prayers with suitable Endeavours; You must often meditate on the Evil and Danger of Sin, of the Excellency of Holiness, and the glorious Rewards that attend it; You must strive and plead with your own backward and disinclined Hearts; You must constantly read and hear the Word of God; You must abandon your former sinful and ensnaring Company; You must flee from all dangerous Enticements that might hazard your relapsing into your former Folly; You must frequent the Society of such as are likely by their Persuasions and Example to strengthen you in your present pious Resolutions and Endeavours; You must explicitly come under the Bond of God's Covenant, by renewing it, not only in secret, but by open and publick Transactions with him. And you have no reason to doubt of his readiness both to accept, and to succeed and crown your sincere, though weak Endeavours.

2. *You must by Faith in Jesus Christ your only Mediator, flee to the Mercy of God for that Pardon that alone can secure you from this Eternal Punishment.*

For by your past sinful Life you have abundantly deserved it; and by the Threatnings of the Law of God you are already bound over to it. And that Bond of Condemnation can only be cancell'd by an Act of free Pardon. And you know there is no Access to a righteous offended God for Remission, but through the Satisfaction and Intercession of Jesus Christ. Come then to him as the only powerful Advocate of guilty and perishing Sinners; put your Souls by Faith under the Covert and Protection of his atoning Blood. And in his Name make your penitent Suit to the Throne of Grace, relying on the Clemency of God, through his Mediation for entire Forgiveness and merciful Acceptance. And you need not fear that a gracious God will ever abandon those to his remediless Justice, that with a contrite Heart flee to the Bowels of his Pity. See Luke xv. Or that a compassionate Saviour will cast out those truly penitent Souls that make him their Refuge, John vi. 37. No, he will espouse and plead their Cause, and by his prevalent Interposal deliver them from the Wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10.

And since what you ought to do, in order to the prevention of this Eternal Punishment, lies so plain before you; let me earnestly exhort you to do it speedily and without delay. And to that purpose I shall only briefly suggest the following Particulars.

1. The greatness of the Evil requires your utmost haste to flee from it.

You can never be too early in preventing so terrible a Danger as this; You can never be too soon secured from endless and remediless Misery. The believing and realizing Fore-thoughts of it should be sufficient to alarm your Fears, and quicken your serious Endeavours, since there can be nothing of greater importance and necessity to your Eternal Interest. So formidable a thing as Eternal Vengeance is not a Matter to be dallied with; the escaping it should be our first and immediate Care.

2. The uncertainty of your Time for preventing it should deter you from delaying it.

You do, for any thing you know, every day tread on the brink of an awful Eternity; You almost daily see many secure and unprepared Souls passing that dreadful Gulph, who perhaps as little thought of being surpris'd by the Justice of God as you now do. So that you are not one moment secure, while you are in an impenitent and unconverted State. O dare no longer to walk on so dangerous a Precipice.

Sleep not on the Top of the Mast while you hang over an Abyss of endless Woe, and know not but you may be [the next hour or moment] sunk into it. Flee then from that terrible Wrath while it is yet to come, and delay not till the day of Vengeance come upon you unawares. Methinks, if an impenitent Sinner could once realize the greatness of his danger, he would no more need Arguments to persuade him to make haste in escaping it, than Lot did to flee out of Sodom, when he foresaw the Storm of destructive Vengeance coming upon it. He would never be at rest till he were safe from so dismal an hazard. He would be afraid to sleep in that condition in which, for any thing he knew, he might awake in the Flames of Hell. O then improve the earliest Warning that's offered to prevent your coming into that Place of Torment. Many Thousands are now repenting their wretched Delays, who thought they had as much Time before them as you do, but found to their cost that the evil Day overtook them when they were putting it far from them.

3. Your early Care to escape that Eternal Punishment is as necessary to your Comfort, as 'tis to your Safety.

For sure the very anxious Fears of it must needs be extremely uneasy to an awakened Conscience. Who would not tremble that foresees such an approaching State of endless Misery, and knows not but it may be his Lot and Doom for ever. There's nothing but stupid Inconsideration can keep such a Man from inward Disquiet and Terror of Mind. So that if we would not lull our Consciences asleep with a false and pernicious Peace; if we would lay the Foundation of solid Serenity and Comforts in our own Breasts, we must immediately abandon the Paths of Death and Hell; we must by a believing and penitent Application to the Mercy of God through the Mediation of Jesus Christ, sue for his gracious Absolution and Pardon; and that alone can secure us from deserved Eternal Punishment. And, O what a refreshing Ease would it give to a Soul that had once felt the weight of its own unpardoned guilt, to be enabled to say on just grounds, *My Iniquity is forgiven, and to me there is now no Condemnation*, Rom. viii. 1.

But this leads me to the

IV. And last Use, which I shall address to the Righteous themselves; and that in the three following Particulars.

1. Bless God for the Hope you have of escaping this Eternal Punishment.

Your Sins did once expose you to it, and you owe it to the free Mercy of God that the Bonds of your Guilt are now cancell'd. Nay, it was his sovereign Grace that stopped you in your mad Career of Sin, and thereby happily prevented your Eternal Ruin. It was by his own compassionate Hand that you have been *snatched as Brands out of the Fire*. Adore his Pity that has recalled your wandering Souls out of the paths of Hell, and guided your Feet into the Way of Peace. Account it not an inconsiderable Mercy that you are secured from Eternal Condemnation.

Adore that merciful Saviour that delivers you from the Wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10. He has by becoming a Curse for you, redeemed you from the Curse of God's violated Law. He has by dying in your stead, released you from the Bonds of Eternal Death, and saved you from the lowest Hell.

2. Maintain such a cautious Fear of that Punishment as may prevent your wilful relapsing into Sin.

For while we are in this State of Trial, and exposed to so manifold Temptations, even the best of us need the preventive Fear of Hell as a preservative against presumptuous Transgressions. So that the Threatnings of God are as truly useful to us as his Promises, and we as truly need the former to deter us from Sin, as the latter to encourage us to our Duty.

Our

Our Lord did not think it unnecessary to caution his Disciples, That they should fear him that could destroy both Body and Soul in Hell for ever, Matth. x. 28, &c. Nor do the Apostles think the Arguments drawn from a future Vengeance improper to be used even with those of whom they hoped better things, such as accompanied Salvation. And indeed, in some Surprises of sudden and violent Temptation, perhaps this Argument is likely to be the most forcible and effectual. So that when more ingenuous Principles fail, a just Fear of Vengeance may lay a powerful restraint on our corrupt Inclinations. Let us then be as fearful of walking here in the Way of the Wicked, as we would be of their future dismal End; let us affect a suitable difference in our Practice from them, from whom we expect to be so wonderfully differenced in our Eternal Doom.

3. Let us do our utmost to save others from that endless Punishment.

O warn the careless ungodly Sinners about you, whither their wretched Course will certainly lead them. Have compassion on those stupid Souls that have no Pity on themselves, and save them with Fear, plucking them as Brands out of the Eternal Bur-

ning, Jude 23. Let not your Charity towards your Relations and Acquaintance fall short of the damned rich Glutton's towards his surviving Brethren. Warn them with all earnestness that they come not into that Place of Torment, xvi Luke 27, 28. Let none perish for ever through your treacherous Neglect to prevent it by your faithful Admonitions. Use all necessary plainness with them in a Matter of infinite moment, where the danger is so certain and so great. If your Warnings prevail, you have saved a precious Soul from Eternal Death, v James 20. If they do not, you have at least delivered your own Souls. Let not their Blood be required at your hand for want of your seasonable Warning.

I shall now conclude this Subject with my serious Wishes, That none of you that have heard of this terrible Doom of the Wicked may ever come to feel it. May these Discourses that are intended to prevent your danger by warning you of it, never aggravate your guilt by your turning a deaf Ear to those necessary Warnings. May none of you be led away with the Errors and Folly of the Wicked here, lest you should at the last go away with them into Everlasting Punishment.

S E R M O N XVII.

The Sin and Punishment of the Fallen Angels.

Epistle of Jude v. 6.

And the Angels which kept not their first Estate, but left their own Habitation, he hath reserved in Everlasting Chains under Darknes unto the Judgment of the Great Day.

Compared with 2 Pet. xi. 4.

For if God spared not the Angels which sinned, but cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into Chains of Darknes, to be reserved unto Judgment.



THE Righteous Severity of the great God towards fallen Angels being by these two inspired Apostles set before us as a solemn Warning to all Wicked and Ungodly Men, it may well deserve our most serious Consideration. And the attentive Contemplation of it will afford Matter of useful Instruction and Admonition to us. And 'tis in order to our Improvement of it to such excellent Purposes, that I would offer these two Passages as the Subject of your present Meditation.

As all Mankind are every where in the Holy Scriptures distributed into those two comprehensive Classes, The Righteous or The Wicked, The Children of God or The Children of the Devil; so those of the higher Angelical Order are likewise ranked into those two comprehensive Classes of Good and Holy, or Evil Angels and unclean or unholy Spirits.

'Tis of the latter of these that these two inspired Writers speak. And they represent to us, their Sin and Guilt, and their Punishment, or the Righteous

Sentence and Doom passed upon them on the account of it.

And I shall distinctly consider each of these Heads to make way for the Practical Reflexions I intend on this awful Subject.

I. We are to consider the Sin and Guilt of the fallen Angels.

The Apostle Jude speaks of them as not keeping their first Estate, but leaving their own Habitation: The Apostle Peter speaks of them as having sinned, ἀμαρτησάντων.]

Both of them plainly imply, That those who are now Evil, were once Good and Holy Angels. These noble intellectual Creatures were pure and sinless Ones at their first Creation. If Man himself, when he first came out of the hands of God, was made upright, and was adorned and beautified with the amiable Image of his Maker; we have all possible reason to suppose the same concerning all of this higher Order of unembodied Spirits, whose intellectual Powers and Capacities so far surpass ours. Nay, 'tis not improbable,

probable, that they all of them retained their primitive Innocence and Purity, when this lower World was formed. For we are told, That when the Foundations of this Earth were laid, the Morning-Stars (whose first bright Luminaries of the intellectual World) sang together, and all the Sons of God shouted for Joy, Job. xxxviii. 7. All of them, without any such distinction between Good and Evil Angels as Sin has now made.

'Tis also here plainly implied, That though Angels (as well as Man) were at their first Creation pure and innocent, yet they were but mutable Creatures. They were not fix'd in a State of unchangeable Holiness; they were placed in a State of Trial, as Man afterwards was; and left, as he was, to the freedom of their own Will, and in the hand of their own Counsel. They wanted no Power to persist in their Integrity, and in a State of entire Subjection to God, and full Obedience to his Commands: But yet they were capable, by the abuse of their reasonable Faculties, of making a criminal Defection from their Allegiance and Duty to him. And this evidently appeared by the sad Event.

But still the main Enquiry remains, What their Sin and Guilt was?

The Apostle Peter gives us only a general Account of it, when he calls them the Angels that sinned. But he does not specify what their first particular Offence and Crime was. The Apostle Jude tells us, That they kept not their first Estate (as our Translators render the word ἀρχὴν) but left their own Habitation. And those who follow this Translation, do generally understand, by their first Estate, their Estate of Innocence and Holiness in which they were first created. And by their own Habitation, they understand the highest Heaven, in which they were first placed, and which was designed by God to be the happy Mansion and Abode of those noble Spirits, which he chose to be the immediate Attendants on his Throne, and the Ministers of his Providence to execute his Orders, and fulfil his Pleasure, Psl. ciii. 20, 21. This glorious Station some suppose them voluntarily to quit, and make that some part of their Crime; though others think rather, that they were banished thence, and so make this one part of their deserved Punishment, and therefore only the penal Consequent of their Sin and Disobedience. And this seems the more probable, because their being cast down into Hell, is mentioned by the Apostle Peter, as one part of the righteous Doom passed upon them.

We are therefore still at a loss wherein their sinning consisted. There are, indeed, some Things in general that we may more certainly conclude concerning it, from what the Scriptures both here and elsewhere suggest; and there are some Things that we may draw some probable Conjectures from concerning it.

There are some Things concerning their sinning in general that we may more certainly conclude.

'Tis evident, That they sinned without a Tempter.

The holy Angels that persisted in their primitive Innocence, continued to set them a bright Pattern of Obedience. And to be sure would, instead of soliciting them to, dissuade them from casting off their Allegiance to their heavenly Lord and Sovereign. Ignorance and Weakness could not be the occasion of their Defection. They were endued with too great a Measure of Knowledge and Wisdom to be deceived into such a criminal Rebellion. For though we read of the Devil and his Angels, of the Dragon and his Angels, of a Prince of the Aereal Host, of one that was the Captain and Leader of this Host of revolting Spirits; yet he could not involve the rest in the same Rebellion with himself by imposing on their Understandings, and thereby deluding them into it. As was the case of One of our first Parents, of whom we read, That she being deceived, was first in the Transgression, 1 Tim. 2. 14.

And therefore we may conclude, That their first Sin was most wilful and presumptuous. It was some

Instance of Disobedience, wherein they most perversely set up their own Wills, in the most known and direct Opposition to the declared Will of God. Even such an Opposition as carried with it a manifest Contempt of the Authority of God, and a virtual Renunciation of his just and holy Government. And (as one well expresses it) if we consider them as Angels created in such a State of Excellency and Perfection; as they could not sin at a lower rate, than this, because they had none to delude them into it by subtilty; so they could not sin at an higher rate nor with greater aggravation of their Crime.

So far we are upon more clear and certain Grounds.

I now add, That there are some Hints given us in the Scriptures, and from the Time of the Fall of these Angels, that may furnish us with some probable Conjectures about their Guilt.

The Apostle Paul intimates to us, That Pride was the first Spring of the Revolt of the fallen Angels. Thus when he describes the Characters of a Christian Bishop or Pastor, he tells us, He should not be a Novice, (or One newly come to the Faith, as your Margin reads it, not a new Convert to Christianity, μὴ νεόφύτος.) And he gives this reason for the Caution, lest being puffed up with Pride, he fall into the Condemnation of the Devil, 1 Tim. iii. 6. His words fairly imply, That Pride was the chief Source of the Devil's Fall and the Condemnation it subjected him to.

Let us then trace this Fall of theirs to the particular Time of it. We find all those Sons of God, persisting in their Innocence, and joining in their Acclamations and Praises to their Maker when he laid the Foundations of this Earth. And yet after the Creation of our first Parents, we read of their woful Fall, and of the Devil (the Head of fallen Angels) under the Form of a Serpent acting the part of a Tempter to seduce them into a Defection from God. And in allusion to this Form that he assumed, he is called the Old Serpent.

'Tis therefore no improbable Conjecture to suppose, That the blessed God upon the Creation of Man, and constituting him the Lord of this Earth, and giving him the Dominion over all inferior Creatures in it, commanded the Angels to become ministering Spirits to this new Rank and Order of his reasonable Creatures; that the rest of the Angels readily complied with this Divine Command; but that he, who is now called Prince of Devils, with multitudes of others joining in a voluntary Confederacy with him, being moved with Envy at this singular Honour put on this new Order of Creatures, and puffed up with that Pride in their own superior Excellencies, that made them disdain to stoop to an Office below what they thought was suitable to the Rank and Dignity of such nobler Creatures, absolutely refused to obey this Command, and set up their Wills herein in Opposition to their Maker's Will; and thereby virtually disclaimed the Authority of God, and resolved to cast off the Yoke of his Government.

Besides, it may be farther supposed, That the blessed God revealed to the Angels his wise and gracious Counsels of sending his own Son to assume human Nature, and of constituting this his Incarnate Son the Head of Angels, and subjecting those heavenly Principalities and Powers to his Authority. And that though those Angels that now persist in their Innocence, yielded a ready Assent to this Divine Appointment and Constitution, yet the Head of the now Apostate Angels, and all those that confederated with him from the same Spirit of Envy and Pride, set themselves in Opposition to the Will of God herein, and chose rather to leave their first Habitation, than to submit to this Divine Constitution which they arrogantly thought a Diminution to their own Rank and Dignity.

And the Words of the Apostle Jude (as some translate them) seem to countenance this Supposition;

for those words, *The Angels that kept not (or, served not) their first Estate*, may as truly be rendered, *The Angels which kept not their own Head, or Principality* (τῶν ἐαυτῶν) i. e. those Angels that obstinately refused to subject themselves to the Authority of the Son of God, whom he had declared to be their Head, and to whose Dominion he had subjected them. And if we read the words thus, they point out the particular Crime of the fallen Angels. That passage of the Inspired Writer to the Hebrews may lead us to this sense of them, *when he brings in the first-begotten into the World, he saith, Let all the Angels of God worship him, Heb. i. 6. (i. e. reverence and own and obey him as their Head and Lord.)* And it is therefore no improbable Conjecture, That their obstinate Refusal to pay this Homage to him, and to act as ministering Spirits under him, was the Crime by which Angels fell, and that *Pride and Envy* were the fatal Spring of it.

And this Supposition gives us the most reasonable Account of the *Malice* of those evil Spirits towards Mankind, and of their unwearied Endeavours to seduce them into the same Guilt of Rebellion against God with themselves, and to render them as *wicked and miserable* as they are themselves.

Having made the best Enquiry I could from what Light the Holy Scriptures suggest into the Sin of the fallen Angels, I now proceed,

II. To consider the *Punishment* of the fallen Angels, or the righteous Sentence and Doom passed upon them.

And here we must consider distinctly the *present Punishment* inflicted immediately upon their Sin and Rebellion, and the severer and more dreadful *Punishment* to which they are reserved at the Day of final Judgment.

First, We may consider their *present Punishment* inflicted immediately upon their Sin and Rebellion.

The Apostle Peter expresses it first in general Terms, *God spared them not.*

This not only imports, That a provoked God proceeded against them with a just Severity in punishing their wilful Rebellion against him, but that he did so immediately and without Delay. He exercised no such *Forbearance* and *Lenity* towards them in order to reclaim them as he does towards the Race of fallen Adam. He provided no Mediator for them to interpose in their Favour, *To take on him their Nature* (or, as the words may be better rendered, *To lay hold upon them*, in order to prevent their falling into remediless Ruin, (Heb. ii. 16. He made no merciful Attempt to recover them and bring them back to their Allegiance and Duty, by any Offers of Pardon, by any Proposals of Peace and Reconciliation. They were the first of his reasonable Creatures that turned Rebels against him, by casting off his Authority, and opposing his righteous Will; and he resolved to make them the awful Instances and Monuments of his vindictive Justice by a speedy Execution of it. They no sooner sinned but their righteous Sentence was passed, and the Execution of it begun.

The first Step of their begun Punishment was their Banishment from the highest Heavens.

They left their own Habitation. They would rather quit it than submit, and therefore were justly expelled from it, as our first Parents were from that earthly Paradise wherein they were placed. A provoked God would not endure such Rebels to continue in his immediate Presence (i. e. in that Heaven where he, as it were, keeps his Royal Court and Residence; where he makes the most illustrious Manifestation of himself, and which is represented as the Habitation of his Holiness and his Glory.) This was indeed their own Habitation or Dwelling-Place, while they retained their primitive Innocence. And would have been so for ever, had they persisted in their Obedience as the holy Angels did. But their wilful Disobedience rendered them utterly unworthy to reside any longer in those

undefiled Regions of Light and Purity. They were unworthy to be any longer Attendants on the Throne of God, whose Orders and Commands they had perverfely refused to obey. They were unfit to converse with those Ministers of his heavenly Court, who continued in their Loyal Subjection to the Eternal and Immortal King. And as earthly Princes are wont to punish disloyal Subjects by banishing them out of their Court and Kingdom; so were they justly condemned to be perpetual *Exiles* from that glorious Kingdom above, and from those Regions of Light and Bliss there, and doomed never to return to them any more.

Another Step of their present Punishment was their being cast down to Hell, (as our Translators render the word, τάρταρος used by the Apostle Peter.

The word does indeed certainly imply their Expulsion from Heaven. But judicious Expositors differ about the Place to which they were cast down.

The generality of them do (as our Translators) suppose what we call the *Hell of the Damned* to be the Place to which they were driven, and understand the Expression of *their being delivered unto Chains of Darkness*, concerning their being there held as it were in Durance and Confinement, in allusion to Malefactors that are sent to some dark Prison where they are chained and bolted to secure their Confinement, and to prevent their escaping out of the Hands of publick Justice. And whereas 'tis an obvious Objection against this, how then can those fallen Angels be represented in the Holy Scripture as restlessly employed in tempting Mankind here upon this Earth when thus confined to these *Chains of Darkness in Hell*? They answer, That the great God to subserve the ends of his wise and just Providence, can, when he please, loose these Chains, and suffer them upon this Earth to prosecute their malicious and mischievous Purposes, and when he pleases, remand them back to this infernal Prison.

But there are some judicious Expositors who choose rather to render the word τάρταρος cast them down into these lower Regions of the Air. And 'tis certain the word τάρταρος is often used in profane Authors concerning this lower Region of the Air.

To this purpose they observe, That this lower Region of the Air seems to be frequently represented in the Holy Scriptures as the ordinary Residence and Rendezvous of the Devil and his Angels. Thus the Leader of the fallen Angels is called the *Prince of the Power of the Air* (or, the *Prince of the Aereal Host*, as the Expression may be rendered, Eph. ii. 2.) And when the same Apostle represents to us our *Spiritual Enemies* whom we are called to wrestle with, he calls them *Principalities and Powers, and the Rulers of the Darkness of this World, and spiritual Wickednesses in high Places*, Eph. vi. 12. By which may be understood the wicked Spirits that chiefly reside in this Region of the Air [τὰ πνεύματα τῆς πονηρίας τῆς ἐν ἡμέραις] And 'tis certain, That the Devil and his Angels are everywhere represented in Scripture, as going to and fro in this Earth, and walking up and down in it, Job i. 7. And by the Apostle Peter, as walking about as roaring Lyons, seeking whom they may devour, 1 Pet. 8. And 'tis certain, that it was a current Opinion, not only among the Heathens, but among the Jews, That this lower Region of the Air was the usual Abode of Evil Spirits, and full of them. And this Opinion was generally entertained by the most judicious of the ancient Christian Writers.

And those modern Expositors, who suppose this lower and comparatively dark Region of the Air, to be the Place whither the fallen Angels were cast down, do, pursuant to their Opinion, suppose these fallen Angels not to be actually bound up in those *Chains of Darkness* that these two inspired Writers mention, but only reserved unto them, in order to their being bound up in them at the Day of Judgment. And therefore they thus render the words of the Apostle Jude

Jude, He kept them unto Everlasting Chains under Darkness, to the Judgment of the great Day, i. e. as their full Punishment to be at that Day inflicted on them. And they thus render the Words of the Apostle Peter, He delivered them unto Chains of Darkness, kept (or, reserved) for them against that final Judgment.

I shall not farther prosecute the Debate about the present Place of the *Fallen Angels*, though the latter Opinion seems to me more probable and consonant to other Passages in the Holy Scriptures.

Thus far we see these fallen Angels already punished by being banished from the highest Heavens (formerly *their own Habitation*) without the least Hope of regaining these Seats of Bliss; and cast down from thence, either into Hell, that infernal Prison, that dark and bottomless Pit, or into this lower Region of the Air, where we may justly suppose them filled with Despair and Malice against the blessed God, despairing of his Mercy, and trembling at the Dread of that farther and severer Punishment reserved for them at the great Day of Judgment; and in the mean time inflamed with Malice against Mankind, and active in their Endeavours to oppose the Designs of Divine Grace towards the Recovery of the lost Race of Adam, by involving them in the like Guilt and Perdition with themselves.

I now proceed,

Secondly, To consider that farther and severer Punishment, to which they are reserved at the great Day of final Judgment.

That the fallen Angels are not at present as completely wretched and miserable as they shall hereafter be; That there is a farther and more grievous Punishment to be inflicted on them at the Day of Judgment, was generally believed by the ancient Christian Writers. And their Judgment herein seems very consonant to several Passages in the *New Testament*.

We read concerning those two Men that came out of the Tombs, possessed with Devils, and exceeding fierce, That when our Saviour met them, the Devils cry'd out, *What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? Art thou come to torment us before the Time?* Matth. viii. 29. And if we compare this Account with that parallel one in the Evangelist Luke, the Number of these Devils were no less than a Legion, or Twelve Thousand, Luke viii. 26. But what I would chiefly observe is, That the Devils did expect a State of Torment beyond what they had ever yet felt, and a Time when the Son of God would adjudge them to it, and therefore here expostulate with him about the Time of it. (See also Mark i. 24. and Luke iv. 34. where the Devils put the like Question, *Art thou come to destroy us?* ἄπολέσαι.)

Again, We may observe, That that State of Endless and Remediless Misery to which all wicked Men shall be adjudged at the last Day, is called, *The Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels*, Matth. xxv. 41. And this seems to imply, That they are not as yet cast into it, though they shall then be.

And we may particularly read concerning the Prince or Leader of these fallen Angels, That when the Dead, small and great, shall stand before God, &c. the Devil, together with the Beast, and false Prophet, shall be cast into the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, and shall be tormented Night and Day for ever and ever. (See Rev. xx. 10. compared with 12 and 15) which implies, That this State of their compleat Torment is yet to come.

And I have already shown you, That the words of these two inspired Apostles may very well be so rendered, as to imply, That these Chains of Everlasting Darkness they speak of, are rather what the fallen Angels are reserved and kept to, than actually now bound up and confined in them.

And I shall only add, That when the Apostle James represents the Devils themselves as believing the Existence of God, he also represents them as trembling at the fearful Expectation of the more terrible Effects

of his Wrath and fiery Indignation, that are yet to come, James ii. 19. *Thou believest that there is One God, thou dost well; the Devils also believe and tremble.*

Having thus considered the Sin and the Punishment of the fallen Angels, it now remains, that we make some Practical Reflexions thereon for our own Instruction and Edification.

And,

I. From the sinning of Angels, we may see what a woful Transformation, Sin has made in the noblest of God's reasonable Creatures.

These Angels that fell were of the same Order, and at first endued with the same exalted Powers, and the same moral Excellencies with those that stood. And if there was any different Degrees among them, as the distinction of Arch-Angels and Angels seems to import, 'tis very probable that the great Leader in this Rebellion against God's sovereign Authority was one of that higher Rank of Arch-Angels. And therefore we read of Michael the Arch-Angel contending with him, in the Dispute about the Body of Moses. (See ver. 9. of this Epistle of Jude.) These heavenly Principals and Powers, as they are stiled, were once replenished with the same heavenly Wisdom, and adorned with the same shining Beauties of Holiness, and inflamed with the same ardent Love to the blessed God as the rest. They joined with the rest in admiring the matchless Perfections, and applauding the marvellous Works of their great Creator and Lord. But when once Pride and Envy were harboured in their Minds, and engaged them in a desperate Opposition to the Authority and Will of their Maker, what a dismal Change do we see! Their Wisdom degenerated into Craft and Falshood; a black Deformity of Wickedness razed out of the Beauties of Holiness; their Love to God was turned into a malignant Enmity to him, and Rage against him, engaging them in a desperate Opposition to his Honour and Interest. Instead of beneficent Goodness towards Man, their Fellow Creature, Envy prompted them to seek his Ruin, by involving him in the same Guilt and Misery with themselves. An arrogant Pride moved them to invade the Empire of God, by seducing Mankind, in order to the enslaving them to their own usurped Dominion. O deplorable Change! Once glorious Angels of Light, but now of Darkness! Once the Favourites and Loyal Subjects of God, now obstinate Enemies to him, and Rebels against him! Once dutiful Attendants on his Throne, now arrogant and desperate Invaders of it! Once pure and spotless, now unclean and hateful Fiends! Such an hideous and monstrous Transformation has Sin made in their once excellent Nature. And this should make us deeply sensible how great a Malignity there is in it, and how detestable the Fruits of it are.

II. If Pride and Envy in particular had the chief hand in the Fall of these once holy Angels, we may learn how abominable and provoking these Sins are in the Eyes of God.

A profound Humility becomes all reasonable Creatures in their demeanour towards that God, between whom and them there is such an infinite Distance and Disproportion. And therefore holy Angels are represented as covering their faces, and their feet, in their Approaches to him, to express their profound Veneration for him, and deep Self-abasement before him. And that Humility should appear in an entire Subjection of their Wills to his. And therefore to be so puffed with the swelling Thoughts of their own Excellency, as to set their Wills in a stubborn Opposition to his, is a most daring and provoking Affront to his sovereign Authority. And next to such Arrogance and Pride towards God, Envy at the good of our Fellow-Creatures, is a most hateful Sin, and carries in it the greatest contrariety to his beneficent Goodness and Love. We should therefore guard against these Sins that are so peculiarly detestable in the Eyes of God.

III. From

III. From the *Sin and Punishment* of the fallen Angels considered together, we may learn the hainous Demerit of Sin, and the just Severity of God in avenging it.

The fallen Angels were the first Rebels against God, and they are set forth as the fearful Examples and Monuments of his Justice to all succeeding Ages, even to the End of the World. They had no sooner sinned, by opposing God's Authority and Command, but a Sentence of perpetual Banishment from those blissful Regions wherein they were placed, was passed upon them. Those *Morning-Stars*, those once *Angels of Light*, are doomed to *Everlasting Darkness*. They have left *their own Habitation*, never to return to it more. They are excluded for ever from the blissful Presence of that God, whose Authority and Orders they arrogantly presumed to oppose. They are cast down from those highest Heavens which were once their blessed Abode, either into the deep Abyss of Hell, or at least into these lower Regions of the Air, and are abandoned to utter Despair of ever regaining those Mansions of Glory they have left, and to a perpetual Dread of that farther Punishment that is to be inflicted on them at the great Day of final Judgment. O deplorable Change in their State as well as in their Nature! No Invitations to return are sent after them, no Offers of Pardon made unto them. They wilfully forsook their Allegiance and Duty to God, and are now utterly forsaken by him. As they sinned without a Tempter, they are left to perish without Remedy.

And shall we not hence see what an abominable Evil presumptuous sinning is in God's Account? What an hainous Provocation it is to the Eyes of his Glory? Shall we not here behold in how terrible a manner his incensed Justice flames out against it? Shall we not tremble at his Wrath, who would not spare such once excellent and noble Creatures, when they once dared to dispute and oppose his sovereign Authority? The higher their Rank and Dignity was, the greater natural Perfections they were indued with, when once their Pride in them tempted them to rebel against their Maker and supreme Lord, they are made the more terrible Examples of his inexorable Vengeance. And should not such a righteous and sin-avenging God be the Object of our religious Reverence and Dread?

IV. If God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down, &c. then what reason have we to admire and adore the distinguishing Mercy of God in that different Treatment that we of the fallen Race of *Adam* meet with at his Hands.

I may here justly apply the words of the Apostle Paul on a different Occasion, and call you to behold the Severity and Goodness of God, Rom. xi. 22. The Severity of God towards the Angels that sinned, but his Goodness towards us that are yet spared. Terrible Justice immediately pursued their Crimes. They no sooner sinned, but they were cast down. But we are the Objects of that Forbearance and Goodness of God that daily leads us to Repentance, Rom. ii. 4. No Mediator was appointed to expiate their Guilt, and intercede for their Pardon. But such a one is provided for us. No Proposals of Reconciliation, no Overtures of Mercy were ever made to them; but God is in Christ reconciling the World (of sinful and guilty Men) to himself, not imputing their Trespasses to them, but offering them a free Indemnity and Absolution upon their penitent Return to him. His Son was not sent to lay hold on Angels, to prevent their sinking into utter Perdition. But he came to rescue self-destroyed Men from the brink of Eternal Ruin. The irreversible Sentence and Doom against the fallen Angels was in part put in immediate Execution, and their farther Punishment is reserved to the Day of Judgment. But guilty Men are not only under a merciful Reprieve, but have a Pardon freely tendered to them, and have a Space and Time of Repen-

ance allotted to them, and are yet under a possibility, nay, have a certain Hope of recovering their lost Happiness, upon their Compliance with the Terms of Life and Salvation that are set before them. If you ask then, How comes the great God to deal so differently with fallen Man from what he has done with fallen Angels? 'Tis indeed true, That there is such a difference between their Case and ours, as may sufficiently justify his Conduct herein. They were Creatures of an higher Rank, and endued with greater Excellencies, and consequently their Disobedience and Rebellion was more aggravated and excusable. They sinned without a Tempter, so did not we; they sinned in Heaven it self, where they enjoyed the beatifick Vision of the Divine Glory; we on this Earth; they were unembodied Spirits, we Spirits that dwell in Flesh; they had not that hereditary Corruption entailed upon them, that we the Race of fallen *Adam* now have. They were not involved in that Darkness and Ignorance that we are, nor had so manifold Incentives to Sin, and Difficulties in the way of our Duty to struggle and contend against, as we now have. And therefore our Case at first View may seem more compassionate than theirs. And yet though such Considerations may be truly alledged to justify the Divine Conduct in the different manner of dealing with them and us; yet still we have reason with all Thankfulness to own this distinguishing Mercy of God, in providing a Remedy for fallen Man, that he did not provide for fallen Angels; and in exercising such marvellous Long-suffering towards us, even towards the greatest of Sinners on this Earth, when he exercised no such sparing and forbearing Mercy towards the sinning Angels in Heaven. We must chiefly ascribe this to his sovereign good Pleasure, to his unmerited Compassion, who will have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy. And to him the Praise of this discriminating Goodness and Pity must be given.

V. The *Sin and Punishment* of the fallen Angels should be a solemn Warning to us, against that wilful continuance in a State of Enmity and Course of Disobedience, that will certainly subject us to the same Condemnation with the fallen Angels at the Day of Judgment.

And 'tis for this End that both these inspired Apostles here set before us this awful Example of the Guilt and the terrible Doom of the Angels that fell. And the Apostle Peter subjoins the no less fearful Example of the Destruction of the Inhabitants of this Earth by a Deluge, and both of them mention that memorable Example of God's tremendous Justice, in turning the wicked Cities of *Sodom and Gomorrah* into Ashes, and destroying their Inhabitants by Fire from Heaven, making them thereby (as the Apostle Peter speaks) an Example to all that after should live ungodly. And the same Apostle, from all these three Instances of Divine Vengeance, draws this Inference, That the Lord knows how to deliver the Godly out of Temptations, but to reserve the Unjust unto the Day of Judgment to be punished, 2 Pet. ii. 6, 9.

Our present State in this World being only a State of Probation and Trial, preparatory for a State of unseen future Rewards and Punishments in the World to come, 'tis not to be expected, that the Justice of God should, in its ordinary Methods towards Mankind, immediately punish their Crimes with destructive temporal Judgments. This being the Time for the Exercise of Divine Forbearance and Long-suffering to them. And yet 'tis no less congruous to the Wisdom of God, that for the awakening secure Sinners to Repentance, and the keeping up the Belief and Reverence of his vindictive Justice in the World; he should sometimes manifest his just Abhorrence of the Wickedness of Men, by suffering his Anger to flame out against them in the terrible and visible Effects of it, that when these his tremendous Judgments are in the Earth, the Inhabitants of it may learn Righteousness.

business. But concerning this Instance of Divine Justice on the fallen Angels, I may, in allusion to the words of the Apostle Paul, truly say, That the Wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against the Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men, in the Example of those Angels whom their Disobedience has cast down from thence, whose dreadful Fall should be a perpetual Warning to us on Earth, lest by our being drawn into the like Guilt, we should share in their Punishment, and come at last into the same Place of Torment with them. I say, into the same Place of Torment; for you may observe, That the Sentence which shall be passed on all the impenitently Wicked, runs in this awful strain, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, Matth. xxv. 41. q. d.* This Everlasting Fire, this State of Endless Torment, these Everlasting Chains of Darknes, are the Portion and Lot which Divine Justice has prepared for the Devil and his Angels, and has reserved them to it. You have joined with them in rejecting my Authority, and casting my holy Laws behind your Backs; You have been drawn into a Confederacy with them in their Enmity and Disobedience, and the same Punishment shall be your Lot and Doom. They were banished from my Presence, and from that highest Heaven that was once their own Habitation, and you shall never be admitted into it. They were reserved (and are now adjudged) unto Everlasting Chains of Darknes; and you that were here their Accomplices in sinning, shall be their Companions in Endless Sufferings and Misery.

And the Equity of this Sentence that shall adjudge wicked Men to the same Punishment with fallen Angels, will fully appear, if we consider, that though in some respects the sinning of the Angels that fell was more aggravated on the account of their higher Excellencies, and of their rebelling in Heaven it self in the midst of all the Glories of it, and that without any Tempter to deceive and seduce them; yet in other respects the Sins of wicked Men may admit of equal Aggravations with theirs. I shall not here stay to consider the case of that part of Mankind, who never enjoyed the Light of Divine Revelation, but yet are chargeable with not glorifying God according to what he made known of himself to them, by the Light of Nature and the Law written in their Hearts; who knowing the Judgment of God, that they which commit such and such Sins are worthy of Death, yet not only did the same, but had pleasure in those that did them. (As the Apostle Paul speaks, *Rom. i. from ver. 18. to the end, and Rom. ii. 15.*) And who persisted in their Ungodliness and Unrighteousness, after a long Exercise of that Forbearance and Patience towards them, which he never used towards the sinning Angels. I shall rather confine my self to the particular Aggravations of their Guilt, who continue wicked though they live where the Light of the Gospel has shone. And sure we may well allow their Guilt equal to that of fallen Angels. They not only reject the Authority and disobey the holy Laws of the God that made them, and in whom they live, and move, and have their Being; but they impenitently persist therein, notwithstanding all the Obligations that redeeming Mercy and Love has laid upon them, which was never extended to the sinning Angels.

If, as some conjecture, it was the Crime of these fallen Angels that they refused to be subject to the Son of God, who was constituted their Head and Lord; how much more aggravated is the Guilt of those that refuse to obey him, who came on the compassionate Errand, of Seeking and Saving them! Who will not be ruled, in order to their being saved by Him! Who practically, at least, deny the Lord that bought them! And refuse to live to him that died for them! The Language of whose Hearts and Lives is, We will not have him to reign over us! How hain-

ous is their Guilt that slight such a merciful Saviour, and neglect so great a Salvation! Who obstinately continue in Sin, notwithstanding all that Forbearance and Goodness of God that leads them to Repentance! Who turn a deaf Ear to all those merciful Invitations to turn and live, that never were addressed to the fallen Angels! Who will not comply with those Offers of Reconciliation and Pardon that were never made to them! Who make light of those Tenders of the heavenly Kingdom, that Angels were expelled from, but never invited to return to! Who judge themselves unworthy of Everlasting Life, by preferring the satisfaction of their sensual Lusts, or the alluring Vanities of this World before it!

Such as these are the peculiar Aggravations of the Guilt of impenitent Sinners under the Gospel. And sure they may reasonably be supposed to render it as hainous and provoking as that of the sinning Angels, especially when we add thereto their perverse Abuse of the Divine Long-suffering.

Nay, some Sinners under the Gospel seem to go, if possible, beyond the Guilt of Devils themselves. We read of their owning Christ to be the Son of God, even when he was in his humbled State here on Earth, and expressing their Dread of his vindictive Justice. But we hear of such daring Sinners as treat his Manifestation in the Flesh with a blasphemous Scorn and Contempt; and of such as laugh at, and make sport with, that Everlasting Fire that is threatened against all unbelieving and impenitent Sinners, as if it were only a painted Flame. But besides these uncommon and daring Flights of Impiety, whereas Devils themselves are represented as believing a God, and trembling at the Apprehensions of his Justice, we have vast Numbers of such insolent Sinners among us, as daily trifle with this tremendous Vengeance, and, as it were, set it at open Defiance, by calling on the God that made them, to damn them.

But we must not think this final Punishment of the Devil and his Angels is confined only to Sinners on Earth of the first Magnitude, or to such as are guilty of these enormous Crimes. No, it will be the Lot of all that do not, when they hear the Gospel, Believe and Obey it. It will not only be the Doom of all that live in gross Sins of Commission, but of those that live in the Neglect of the important Duties of Religion. As our Saviour plainly intimates, when he passes this Sentence on those that fed not his Members when hungry, nor clothed them when naked, nor visited them when sick and imprisoned, *Depart from me, ye Cursed, into Everlasting Fire, prepared for the Devil and his Angels, Matth. xxv. 41.* The want of positive Holiness will as effectually exclude us from the blissful Vision of God, as positive Wickedness, *Heb. xii. 14.* Heaven, that Mansion of Light, from which the fallen Angels were cast down, shall be the Inheritance of none but such as are truly sanctified, and thereby made meet for it.

VI. Let me hence call you to adore that marvellous Grace of God, that has called you to the Hope, and is preparing you for inheriting that highest Heaven, from whence the sinning Angels were cast down.

'Tis certain, that the Number of those Angels that fell is exceeding great. Some have supposed it to be equal to the Number of all those of the Race of Mankind, from the beginning to the end of the World, that shall inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. And that these shall (if we may so speak) supply the Place of the Angels that fell; I know not, indeed, any certain ground for such a Conjecture: But this we do know, that our Saviour has told us, That those of the Children of Men, that are accounted worthy to obtain that World, and the Resurrection of the Dead, shall be equal (or, like to) the Angels, and are the Children of God, being the Children of the Resurrection, *Luke xx. 35, 36, &c.* We are now come (in Faith,

Faith, and Hope, and Relation) to the innumerable Company of Angels, and expect to be their Associates in the Glories of the heavenly State, *Heb. xii. 22.* The Children of God on this Earth are Members of the same Family with the blessed Inhabitants of Heaven, and have Mansions of Glory prepared for them in their Father's House there, *John xiv. 2.* And, O what an admirable Instance is this of the transcendent Grace and Love of God, that such despicable defiled Dust and Ashes, such contemptible Worms of this Earth, should be advanced to shine among these Morning-Stars in the Celestial Orbs! That we, who were once Children of Wrath, and Heirs of Hell, should, by Divine Grace, be made Heirs of God, and Joint-Heirs with Christ!

And there is one Consideration that enhances the more this transcendent Grace of God to us, viz. that we shall be there fixed, in a State of unchange-

able Holiness and Happiness. These fallen Angels were once placed in those highest Heavens, as their own Habitation. But Sin has cast them down from thence. Whereas we, when translated thither, shall possess it as our Eternal and indefezible Inheritance. This Privilege we owe to our Union with and Relation to the Son of God. We, as his Members, shall share in the Glories of our exalted Head; and as he *lives and reigns*, so we shall with him *live and reign for ever*. 'Tis his gracious Promise to us, *I know my Sheep, and I give unto them Eternal Life. And they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hands, John x. 27, 28, &c.* The sinning of Angels has occasioned their being doomed to *Everlasting Chains of Darkness*; Divine Grace will bring us to the Possession of a *Crown of Glory that shall never fade away.*

S E R M O N XVIII.

On the Happiness of *HEAVEN.*

Matth. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.



ETERNAL LIFE is the comprehensive Sum of all that Good that a reasonable Soul can hope for or aspire unto. And therefore 'tis highly congruous to the Wisdom of God in his Moral Government, that it should be proposed as the grand *Motive* and *Encouragement* to all that Obedience and Service that he requires from us. And this, indeed, is the principal Motive that should render our religious Choice free and deliberate. For, though the *Threatnings* of God are highly requisite to awaken our stupid Consciences, and thereby to stop us in our mad Career of Sin, by giving us the dismal Prospect of Eternal Vengeance; yet those Motions in Religion would be but unstable and transient, which are only excited by fervile Fear. And no ingenuous Service could be expected from those that are merely driven to their Duty (as a Slave to his Task) by the dread of Punishment. It has therefore pleased the infinitely wise God to set before us a Motive suitable to our Hope, capable to render his Service not only to our voluntary Choice, but our highest Pleasure and Delight. And truly, the Reward proposed is so transcendently great and glorious, that 'tis sufficient to carry us through all the Difficulties and Dangers that attend a Course of persevering Holiness, not only with Patience and Fortitude, but with Alacrity and Joy. And therefore the frequent Contemplation of it is of admirable Use, not only to engage us to the sincere Profession of Christianity, but to keep us steadfast and unmoveable in the serious Practice of it. And, indeed, 'tis the peculiar glory of Christianity, that the Gospel alone has clearly discovered the Na-

ture and Duration of that future Reward, and given us satisfying Evidence of the certain futurity thereof.

And this unspeakable Reward the Text offers to our View, as the great Object of our Faith and Hope, the noble Prize for which we run and strive, the happy Issue that all our Labours and Sufferings tend to, and shall be for ever crowned with.

Our blessed Saviour having from the thirty first Verse of this Chapter, given us an instructive Account of the Process of the great Day of Judgment, and of the different Sentences that shall then be passed on the Righteous and the Wicked, does in this Verse proceed to mention the Execution of them.

And these (i. e. the Wicked) shall go away into Everlasting Punishment. (Of this I have already treated.) But the Righteous shall go into Life Eternal.

They shall enter on that State of Endless Perfection and Bliss, which the Scriptures so usually set out to us by this Expression of *Eternal Life*.

In prosecution of this Subject, I shall more briefly enquire, *Who* those are, of whose happy Doom the Text relates the Execution; and then more largely enquire, *What* that blessed State they shall then enter into (and which is here called *Eternal Life*) includes in it.

First, Let us briefly consider, *Who* those are, of whose happy Doom the Text relates the Execution.

Ans. 'Tis in general, *The Righteous.*

Now, to understand a-right to whom this Character belongs, and who are described by it, it will be requisite to use a few obvious Distinctions.

1. We must distinguish between *Righteousness*, taken in its more narrow and limited, and in its more full and comprehensive sense.

Righteousness

Righteousness taken in its more narrow and limited sense, implies no more than that single Grace or *Virtue*, that consists in our Inclination to give to every one of our Fellow-Creatures what is their own; or, to do to others, what we would that they should do to us, Matth. vii. 12. So that in this sense, 'tis only one Branch (tho' a very considerable one) of the Duties of the Second Table.

But *Righteousness* taken in its more large and comprehensive sense, includes no less than Conformity to the whole Law of God as the Rule of it. So that 'tis the same thing with *Holiness*, and includes all the Duties of the First as well as all those of the second Table. And, indeed, 'tis as necessary an Instance of *Justice*, to give to God what is his due, as to our Fellow-Creatures what is theirs; and he only is thoroughly and universally *Righteous*, who keeps a Conscience void of Offence towards God as well as towards Men, Acts xxiv. 16.

And 'tis in this more comprehensive sense that we must understand the *Character* given in the Text. Men are only to be denominated truly *Righteous* from their universal Rectitude or Conformity to the Standard of the Divine Law. But,

2. We must distinguish between that perfect and sinless Conformity to the Law of God, which is required as our Duty, and that sincere, though imperfect Conformity to it, which the Gospel promises Acceptance and Reward to.

For that perfect and sinless Conformity to it which is required as our Duty, 'tis, indeed, what Man in his State of Innocence was capable of, and was therefore then made the Condition of a happy Immortality. But to us, in our present State of degeneracy and sinful Impotency, such a sinless Conformity to the Divine Law is rather our earnest *Wish* than our actual happy Attainment. 'Tis what we unfeignedly aspire to, but cannot here fully reach; the full Attainment of it being one part of our promised Reward, and a necessary Ingredient in our future Blessedness.

Accordingly, a gracious God in merciful Condescension to our present Weakness and Infirmary has on the account of the perfect Obedience and Satisfaction of his own Son, published to us that gracious Covenant, wherein he not only promises to pardon all our repented Sins, but to accept our sincere Endeavours after universal Obedience, and to crown them with an Eternal Recompence.

Now, 'tis this sincere Righteousness or Conformity to the Law of God, that the Text intends, as the Character of those that were adjudged to Eternal Life.

And the Sincerity thereof must be chiefly measured by the main bent of our Hearts, and tenor of our Conversation. Those are truly *Righteous* in the Language of Scripture, and according to the merciful Construction of Divine Grace in the Gospel-Covenant, whose Judgments unfeignedly approve the whole Law of God, whose Wills prevalently consent to it, and the Course of whose Actions expresses a studious Care to observe it, no known wilful Transgressions being allowed and continued in, and even our involuntary Swervings and Defects being truly lamented and striven against. And 'tis such as these, and only such that shall enter into *Life Eternal*.

Which leads me to enquire,

Secondly, What that blessed State (here called *Eternal Life*) which the *Righteous* shall then enter into, includes in it.

And here I must necessarily premise, That you are not to expect from me, nor indeed from any Man on Earth, any accurate and full Account of it. We are at present at a great distance from those superior Regions of Eternal Light, and there is a thick Vail of Flesh that hides the Glories of them from our Eye. So that I doubt not but our most elevated Conceptions of that future Blessedness will, when we come to behold and possess it, appear to have been but childish

Thoughts, and far more unsuitable to the Dignity of the Things themselves, than the Apprehensions of a Peasant, confined to an obscure Village, concerning the Magnificence and Pomp of an earthly Court. 'Tis true, indeed, *Life and Immortality is by the Gospel brought to light*, 2 Tim. i. 10. We have a clear and satisfying Assurance of such an Endless Felicity, and some Notices in general of the spiritual Nature of it, to prevent any gross and carnal Misapprehensions of it; but as to the Particulars of it, 'tis a Glory yet to be revealed, and which we can expect no clear and distinct View of till we enter within the Vail, and are admitted into the heavenly Sanctuary. Nay, to check our over-bold and useless Curiosity, we are plainly told, That Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard, nor has it entered into our Hearts to conceive the things God has prepared for them that truly love him, 1 Cor. ii. 9. Nay, perhaps should an Angel or glorified Saint be sent from the other World to inform us concerning the glory of it, we should be unable to understand the Description they give of it. To talk of Heaven in proper Language would be to talk to us in an unknown Tongue, and to amuse us with what we have at present no more Ideas of, than the Blind have of Colours, or the Deaf of Sounds. And so much the Apostle Paul intimates to us, when relating his being caught up into Paradise, he tells us, he heard unspeakable Words (or Things which 'tis not lawful (or, as your Margin reads it, which 'tis not possible) for a Man to utter, 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4, &c. Nay, should the external Glory of the heavenly State be laid open to our naked View, I doubt not but it would be too dazzling a Sight for weak Mortality to bear: If the Israelites could not endure to behold the face of Moses, when it shone upon his descent from the Mount; and if the Disciples of our Lord could not bear the sight of his transfigured Body without great confusion and affrightment, Mark xi. 6. how much more should we be confounded at the View of that Celestial Brightness and Glory, of which this was but an Emblem or Glimpse?

But yet I must subjoin on the other hand, That though we cannot here expect any adequate Conceptions of the heavenly State, yet we are not wholly left in the dark in our Apprehensions about it. We have such Notices thereof given us by Jesus Christ, who came down from Heaven to reveal the Glories of it, as are sufficient in our present State, both to enflame our holy Desires after it, and direct us in the Prosecution of it. We know so much of it as may justly render whatever stands in Competition with it contemptible, and our stupid neglect of it inexcusable. And therefore, though the Apostle John tells us, It does not yet appear what the Sons of God shall be, yet he adds, But this we know, that when he (i. e. our blessed Saviour) appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. And therefore so far as we have Divine Revelation for our Guide, we should gladly follow the Light of it in order to our attaining the clearest Notions of that future Blessedness we can here expect. Since we are not yet admitted to enter into the promised Land, we should, with Moses, ascend Mount Nebo to take a Prospect of it. And we may from some Clusters of its Grapes and other Fruits, make some conjecture concerning the Plenty of that heavenly Canaan. Though we cannot at present mount up to those superior Regions, yet we may by the Prospective of the Divine Promises make some, though very imperfect, Discoveries of those vastly distant but bright and glorious Objects. And this is what I shall endeavour in the following Account of the future blessed State of the *Righteous*.

In order hereto, I shall consider the more general Notions which the Scriptures suggest to us of that blessed State, and then take notice of the chief particular Ingredients of it, which are there intimated to us.

First, I shall consider the more general Notions which the Scriptures give us of the future Blessedness of the Righteous.

And here 'tis observable, that the holy Spirit of God, that inspired the Penmen thereof, has on the one hand, in condescension to our weakness, described it to us in Expressions that allude to present and sensible Things; and yet, on the other hand, has sufficiently intimated to us the sublime and spiritual Nature of it, to prevent any gross and carnal Conceits of it.

The Spirit of God has, on the other Hand, in condescension to our weakness, frequently described it to us in Expressions that allude to present and sensible Things.

For, while our Souls are confined to these earthly Mansions, and receive so great a part of their Ideas from Sense, we are apt to be most deeply affected with such sensible representations of Things; and those comparisons most powerfully strike our Imagination that are drawn from those material Things, which we daily see and converse with.

Thus the future Blessedness of the Righteous is often represented under the Notion of a Kingdom, a Throne, and Crown, to intimate to us the Honour and Dignity, nay, perhaps the Authority and Power to which glorified Saints are advanced. See Matth. xxv. 34. 2 Tim. iv. 8. Rev. iii. 21. Sometimes 'tis set forth under the Emblem of a House and City, to intimate to us, not only the stable continuance of it, but the full provision made for our Happiness in the suitable Accommodations and desirable Converses of the heavenly Society, 2 Cor. v. 1. Heb. xiii. 14. Sometimes 'tis represented as a rich Treasure, and a Pearl of great price, nay, as a vast Inheritance, to intimate to us the abundance of all suitable good we shall there enjoy, and the invaluable Worth and Excellency of it. See Matth. xiii. 44, 45, 46. Sometimes 'tis represented under the Emblem of white Robes and Palms, to intimate the Innocence, the Victory and Triumph of the Blessed, Rev. vi. 9. Sometimes 'tis represented under the Similitude of a great Supper, and particularly of a Marriage Feast, to intimate to us the great Satisfaction and Delight which the Members of Christ shall enjoy in that State of nearest Union to, and most intimate Communion with, their exalted Head and Lord, Luke xiv. 16. Matth. xxii. 1, 2, &c. Sometimes 'tis represented in Allusion to the Earthly Paradise in which Adam was placed, to intimate to us the rich Affluence of all those solid Delights that can give agreeable Entertainment to our refined and enlarged Capacities, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, &c. Sometimes 'tis represented to us under the Emblem of Light and Glory, to intimate to us the true Excellency of our Nature when advanced to its highest Perfection; and that all the Objects we shall there converse with will be as charming and delightful to our Minds, as the splendor of luminous Bodies is to our Eyes, Psal. xxxvi. And thus 'tis often represented under the Notion of Life, because that is in the common Estimate the most valuable Blessing, and the Foundation of all others we enjoy.

By such affecting sensible Allusions does the Spirit of God insinuate into our Minds some suitable Thoughts of the transcendent Honour and Dignity, the compleat Perfection and Excellency, the ravishing and truly satisfying Pleasure and Joy of that happy State. He does hereby accommodate himself to the Lowliness and Poverty of our Understandings, by speaking to us in a Language we can best apprehend, and receive the most easy Instruction from.

But then, on the other hand, the Spirit of God has sufficiently intimated to us the spiritual Nature of that Happiness, to prevent any gross and carnal Conceits of it.

It does, indeed, represent the heavenly Felicity under the Emblem of a Crown; but 'tis a Crown of Righteousness, 2 Tim. iv. 8. It speaks of it under the Notion of an Inheritance; but 'tis an Inheritance that

is pure and undefiled as well as incorruptible, 1 Pet. i.

4. It represents the mystical Bride, the Church, as prepared for the Nuptial Solemnity, by being arrayed in fine Linnen, clean and white; but intimates to us that her Righteousness and Innocence are the splendid Nuptial Robes, Rev. xix. 7, 8. And lest our Minds should, from these sensible Allusions, be led to such low and mean Thoughts as the Body of the Jews seemed to entertain, our Lord plainly tells us, That in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are (ἀσώγγελοι) like the Angels of God in Heaven, Matth. xxii. 30. So that to entertain just Thoughts of their Felicity we must elevate our Minds to Heaven, and think of such refined Joys as are chiefly suited to the Nature and Capacities of immortal Spirits, even of those pure and unembodied Spirits that never dwelt in Flesh, and are by their nobler Make, incapable of the sordid Pleasures of this poor Animal Life. We must imagine what Angels themselves are employed in, what they see and relish, and enjoy, and from thence take the measures of our own future Perfection and Bliss. And accordingly, there are manifold Passages of Scripture that speak more plainly of the Nature of our future Happiness, and describe to us in a more elevated Strain wherein it does consist, and what are the principal Ingredients of it. And 'tis from such Passages chiefly that I shall draw the following Account of it.

Therefore,

Secondly, I come to consider more particularly, wherein the Blessedness of the heavenly State consists, and what are the chief Ingredients of it?

And here I shall consider, in the Blessedness of the Righteous (as before I did in the Misery of the Wicked) both the Negative and Positive part of it.

I. I shall consider the Negative Part of it; I mean, Our entire Exemption from all Evils, both Moral and Natural, both those of Sin and Misery.

For these Evils the Scripture frequently represents under the Notion of Death, and therefore our freedom from them is very fitly signified by this Expression of Eternal Life. For we cannot imagine that this Phrase should barely signify the continuance of our Being and Life, as we are reasonable Creatures. Because we may even here enjoy Life, so loaded and oppressed with extreme Misery, as to render it an intolerable Burden rather than any Pleasure or Advantage. And in the other World, the Thoughts of their continued Life are doubtless to the Damned their greatest Terror; so that to them the Extinction of it were far more desirable. And therefore the Scriptures mention their forlorn and wretched State under the Notion of the Second Death, Rev. ii. 11. because they are dead to all the Blessings and Comforts for which any one would desire to live. Eternal Life must therefore import a State worthy of that Name, even a Life exempted from all the Miseries that could render it undesirable, and sweetened with all the Advantages and Joys that can truly endear it. It must imply Life in its highest Vigour and Perfection.

And indeed, such a Deliverance from all Moral and Natural Evils, is to Man (that was once fallen) a more sensible part of his Happiness than it can be to holy Angels. They have been always possessed of perfect Felicity, and never knew, by Experience, what it was to be miserable. Whereas, we were once in a forlorn and wretched State; and still we are here in a Vale of Tears, almost perpetually groaning, either under the sad Relicks of Sin it self, or under the bitter afflictive Fruits of it. And therefore 'tis a valuable part of our Felicity to be rescued from them. And hence our future Blessedness is so frequently in Scripture called by that peculiar Name of Salvation.

As particularly,

1. It will be one part of our Happiness to be delivered from all the Remains of Sin, and from all Temptations to it.

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Here the Relicks of indwelling Sin make our Life a tedious Warfare; the violent Struggles of this *Body of Death* often extort such bitter Complaints of our wretched Condition as that of the Apostle Paul, Rom. vii. 24. These spiritual Enemies within us are like those in the *Israelites Borders*, as *Thorns in our Sides*, and *Pricks in our Eyes*. They wound a gracious Soul in its most quick and sensible Part. And since our *Corruptions within* are managed by a subtle Tempter from without, this renders our spiritual Conflict the more painful. And, alas! how often are we shamefully foiled, how oft terribly buffeted, and what Anguish does it cost us when we are pierced by any of his *fiery envenomed Darts*!

O what a Happiness then will it be, to have the cursed Remains of Sin entirely extinguished! To have all our spiritual Fetters knocked off, all our defiling Stains thoroughly cleansed, all our Maladies perfectly cured, all our Deformities and Blemishes done away, and not one Spot or Mark of the odious *Leprosy of Sin* remaining upon us! Happy are those *perfected Spirits of the Just*, who have no more occasion to lament the sinful Darkness and Distraction of their Minds, the Rebellion of their unruly Passions, the Irregularity of their Desires, the Carnality and Dulness of their Affections, the Weakness of their Graces, and the woful Defects and Failures of their best Obedience! Happy they, whose wearisome Warfare is ended, in a Perfect Victory and Eternal Triumph! Happy those glorious Conquerors, under whose Feet *Satan is finally bruised*, and who are now placed above the reach of his Malice in that heavenly Paradise, from which that subtle Serpent was once expelled, and into which he can never enter again as he did into the earthly one! Nay, happy they, to whom all the Temptations drawn from this present sensible World are entirely deadened, and have lost all their force; being over-powered by the Sight and Possession of the glorious Objects of a better! Happy they that have no more Difficulties to overcome, no more Hazards to run, no more spiritual Enemies to vanquish, no more Hardships of their holy Warfare to endure!

2. And as it will be one valuable part of our Happiness to be entirely freed from Sin, so it will be a considerable additional degree of it to be delivered from all those Evils that are the bitter Fruits and penal Effects of it.

1. It will be part of our Happiness to be delivered from the vindictive Wrath of God, and from all those spiritual Evils that arise from the sense of the guilt of Sin, when presented to the View of an awakened Conscience.

For, alas! how oft does our renewed Guilt rob us of our spiritual Comforts, and embitter our Lives with inward Disquiet and perplexing Fears!

We often here walk in (uncomfortable) *Darkness*. The *Light* of God's Countenance is *Eclipsed*; our Sense of his Covenant-Love almost extinguished; our Evidences for Heaven darkened; our Consciences smarting under the Wounds that Sin has given them, and alarm'd with the Terrors of Divine Wrath: This is often the sad Exercise of God's offending Children here, who bitterly complain of their *broken Bones*, and their *roaring all the day long* under the Pressures of Divine Indignation.

O happy then are those glorified Saints, whose Fears are vanished with their Guilt, and who, as they shall sin, so they shall sorrow no more! When they are received into the immediate beatifick Presence of God, all their Doubts cease, and all their uncomfortable Darkness is dispelled for ever. In those Regions of perfect Light and Purity, there are no Clouds to intercept the ravishing Beams of Divine Love; no spiritual Storms of Desertion to disturb the Serenity and Calm of an innocent Soul; no Frowns on the face of our heavenly Father to awaken our jealous Fears; no Anguish of an accusing Conscience to allay

our spiritual Joy. We hear no more there such grievous Complaints as now sometimes drop from the Lips of a desponding *Asaph*, *Will the Lord cast off for ever? And will he be favourable no more? Is his Mercy clean gone for ever? Does his Promise fail for ever more? Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in Anger shut up his tender Mercies?* Psal. lxxvii. 7, 8, 9. Or as those of *Heman*, *Lord, why castest thou off my Soul, why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted, and ready to die from my Youth up, while I suffer thy Terrors, I am distracted, &c.* Psal. lxxxviii. 14, 15, &c. The perfected Love of Heaven does entirely cast out all Relicks of such disquieting and tormenting Fear. See 1 John iv. 18.

2. It will also be a farther degree of our Happiness to be freed from all other *afflictive Evils* which Sin has by the just Judgment of God entailed on our miserable Nature, and filled this lower World with.

Many of those Evils arise from the frailty of our Bodies, or the uncertainty of our temporal Affairs and Concerns.

What are our Bodies, but so many *Tabernacles of Clay*, that ever and anon totter and shake, and are hastning to their final Dissolution! Nay, how does every Member of them carry the Seeds of manifold painful Diseases that often break out, and will at last, with an irresistible Violence, tear down this mortal Frame! And how sufficient is the pain of one disordered Part to bereave us of all the comfortable use of Life, and to tempt us to wish for Release and Ease, even though it were by the unwelcome hand of Death itself! And if we add hereto our frequent Disappointments in our temporal Affairs; our Losses and Injuries; our personal, or our share in the publick Calamities; the uncertainty of our dearest Comforts, and the anxious Fears that we are hereby exposed to, we can look on this Earth as no better than a *Vale of Tears*, a gloomy Scene of successive Miseries, often treading close (like *Job's Messengers*) on the heels of one another, and only checkered with a few transient Glams of external Prosperity. And all these Miseries of Life are but the Harbingers of approaching Death.

But glorified Saints are far above the reach of all these formidable Evils. Their dislodged Souls bid a perpetual Adieu to them as soon as they quit these frail and corruptible Bodies; they happily die to all the Miseries, by dying to all the Sensations and Concerns of this Animal Life: And they enter into that State where we are told, *That God shall wipe away all Tears from their Eyes; and there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain, for the former Things are passed away*, Rev. xxi. 4. All these Evils disappear when this short Scene of Life is over. They are admitted into those serene and blissful Regions which are never overshadowed with the least dark Cloud of Affliction. For in the midst of that innumerable Assembly of the Blessed there is not (to use the Expressions of a devout Writer) *one Eye that weeps, one Breast that sighs, or one Tongue that complains*. Nay, their Bodies themselves shall be rescued from the Power of Death, and remain no more the Spoils of the Grave. *Mortality shall be entirely swallowed up of Life*. And as those refined and spiritualized Bodies shall no longer be subject to the mean Functions and Necessities of this Animal Life; so they shall be entirely exempted from those Infirmities and Blemishes, those Diseases and Pains which so often render our mortal Bodies here an undesirable and incommodious Mansion to those Souls that are confined to them.

Many of these Evils arise from the *Malignity and Violence of wicked Men*.

And when they have Power in their hands, that Malignity often shews it self in all the shapes of Savage-Cruelty, in all the arts and ways of destructive Persecution. And when their hands are in some measure ty'd up, yet their Tongues are at liberty to deride and scoff, to calumniate and defame those whom they cannot

cannot kill and destroy. So that all that follow our blessed Saviour must expect (as he) to endure the sharp Contradiction, and fierce Opposition of Sinners.

But glorified Saints are entered into those peaceful Mansions, where the Wicked cease from troubling and the Weary are at rest, Job iii. 17. They are gone out of the Noise of this malignant World, where the Voice of scoffing Ishmaels, and cursing Shimei's, and railing blasphemous Rabshakeb's is heard no more; where there is no terrible Inquisition-Tribunal, no treacherous and bloody Massacres, no Racks or Wheels, no Fire and Faggot, no Prisons or Gallies to be dreaded any more. They are landed safe on the Shore of Eternity, from whence they can behold, with a fearless Eye, the Storms of this tempestuous Sea whereon they have so long been tossed, and from which they have so happily escaped.

And to add no more, many of these Evils arise from the View of the Sins of others, especially the Corruptions of the Church of God.

We cannot behold the deplorable Ignorance, Delusions and Wickedness of that Vast Part of the World that continues in wretched Infidelity; we cannot see the woful Degeneracy and Depravation of so great a Part of the Christian Church (especially under the Papal Tyranny;) we cannot look on the visible Declensions of Practical Godliness, the abounding of open Irreligion and Immorality; (nay, alas! I may add Infidelity too) the continued Divisions and Animosities that are found among the Reformed Churches themselves, but we shall be ready to say with the Devout Prophet, *Oh! that my Head were Waters, and my Eyes a Fountain of Tears, that I might weep Day and Night, &c.* over so sorrowful a Spectacle as this, Jer. ix. 1.

But in Heaven even these Tears shall be wiped away. These Sorrows shall vanish with the sad Objects and Occasions of them. Instead of the Corruptions, the Distractions and Contentions of the Militant Church here below, we shall be received into a Society shining in Perfect Purity, and cemented in Inviolable Love. There the Controversies and Disputes that here divided the Judgments, and too often the Affections of truly good Men, shall be all ended, not as we vainly endeavour to do it, by Rigid Canons, or Imperious Decrees, but by the irresistible Evidence of convincing Light. There will be no Difference of Opinion and Practice to form us into different Parties; and no such mutual Accusations or Jealousies; no such rigid uncharitable Distance; no such reviling or censorious Language, as here our different Degrees of Light so often occasion for want of a Spirit of Forbearance and Condescension, of catholic and comprehensive Love. There needs nothing there but the clear Light of the Heavenly World, to dispel our Darkness, scatter our uneasy Doubts, correct our involuntary Mistakes, to present Divine Truth in its Native Beauty to the Eye of our Minds, and to enable us to know

as we are known, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. And who that is duly conscious of the comparative Darkness of his own Understanding, and the great Imperfection of his present Knowledge, would not account it an eminent Branch of his Happiness, to come out of this obscure Cell, into the glorious Light of Eternal Day.

Nor shall we in those Peaceful and Blissful Regions have our Hearts saddened with the afflictive Tidings of God's suffering Churches here below. We shall no longer be the mournful Spectators of the barbarous Effects of Antichristian Persecution. We shall no longer lament over Faithful Pastors banished, the Gallies filled with glorious Confessors, Temples laid waste where God was purely worshipped, Christian Flocks scattered, the Light of Divine Truth and the open Profession of it extinguished, and strong Delusions, gross Errors, and Idolatries triumphing over the deplorable Ruins of true and uncorrupted Christianity. We shall either have no Sight or Knowledge of these Desolations of God's *Sion* here below, or shall be able so far to penetrate into the wise Ends for which the Great God sees fit to permit them, and the gracious Purposes towards his Church and People that he will in due time over-rule them to, that the Knowledge of those sorrowful Events will give no Interruption to our undisturbed Felicity and Joy. And though it be our Duty here on Earth, as Members of the Mystical Body of Christ, to sympathize with His suffering Churches, and (as the Inspired Writer to the Hebrews speaks, Heb. xiii. 3.) *To remember them that are in Bonds as bound with them, and them which suffer Adversity, as being ourselves also in the Body;* yet the Belief and Prospect of the blessed Issue that Divine Wisdom and Mercy will bring these dark and afflictive Dispensations to, may contribute to allay our present Sorrows and Griefs: But these Tempestuous Storms of the Church here below, disturb not the Serenity of those Calm and Peaceful Realms Above.

And now, though I have hitherto only considered the blessed State of the Righteous, as an Exemption from those Evils that Sin has subjected us to in our Present State of Mortality; yet you cannot be insensible how necessary and considerable an Ingredient this entire Freedom from them will be in our Future Felicity. As none feel more the real Pleasure of Health, than those that are newly recovered from long painful Maladies; as none relish more the Sweets of Liberty, than those that are rescued from the Miseries and Hardships of a Captive State; so I doubt not, the fresh Remembrance of all the afflictive Evils we have passed through, during this short Scene of Mortality and Misery, will greatly enhance the Joys of our happy Deliverance from them, and give a sweeter Relish to the Positive Part of that Future Blessedness that we shall enter on the Possession of.

S E R M O N XIX.

On the Happiness of *HEAVEN*.

Matth. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.



I HAVE already from this second Clause of the Verse, entered on the Consideration of that *State of Endless Perfection and Blessedness* which the *Righteous* shall be adjudged to, and which the Scriptures so frequently set out to us by this Expression of *Eternal Life*.

I have already,

First, Shewn, *Who* those are, of whose happy *Doom* the Text relates the *Execution*, viz. *The Righteous*.

Secondly, I came to enquire, What that Future Blessed State of the *Righteous*, here called *Eternal Life*, does include in it?

And in order to the fuller Resolution of the Question, I propos'd to consider,

I. The *General Notions* which the Scripture gives us of that Future *Blessedness* of the *Righteous*.

II. I begun to consider the *particular Ingredients* of the *Blessedness* of that Future State of the *Righteous*.

And here I considered both the *Negative* and *Positive* Part of it.

First, The *Negative* Part, viz. *Our entire Exemption from all Evils*, both *Moral* and *Natural*, both those of *Sin* and of *Misery*.

And this is to *Fallen Man* a more sensible Part of his Happiness than it could be to holy Angels, who never knew, by Experience, what it was to be wretched and miserable. And 'tis therefore so often called *Salvation*.

We shall be delivered entirely,

I. From all the Remains of *Sin*, and from all Temptations to it.

And,

II. From all the Penal Effects and Fruits of it.

I now proceed to consider,

Secondly, The *Positive* Part of the *Blessedness* of the *Righteous*.

For 'tis that especially is denoted to us by this Expression of *Eternal Life*. For that can signify no less than *Life* in its utmost Perfection. For the Happiness of that Future State is often in Scripture called *Life*, by way of Eminency, as opposed to this present State of *Mortality*. See *Matth. vii. 14. — xix. 17. — John iii. 36. — x. 10.* which intimates to us, That our present Life, compared with the other, is not worthy of that Name. We are rather, whilst here, to be reckoned among the *Dead* than among the *Living*. As for unregenerate Sinners, their State is but a continued *Death*, 2 *Ephes. i.* (For they are truly dead to all the valuable Purposes and Ends for which Life is desirable.) We may truly say of them (as the Apostle *Paul* par-

ticularly does of *her that lives in carnal Pleasure*, 1 *Tim. v. 6.*) that *they are dead while they live*. And for the State of *Regenerate* but imperfect Saints, 'tis but like that of an *Embryo*, 'tis but the *Soul* and *dawning of Life*. So that as we date our *Natural Life* from the Time of our being born into the Light of this World, not reckoning the Time of our Formation in the Womb for any Part of it; so may we date our *nobler and diviner Life* from the Time of our being born into the Light of *Eternity*, without regard to the imperfect Beginnings of it in this our *Embryo-State*. We then truly live, when we draw our first Breath in the Air of *Heaven*; when we open our Eyes on the Beauties and Glories of the unseen World, and enter on the Work and Joys of our unknown State there. That is, indeed, the true *Birth-day* of a *Saint*. And what we shall then *be*, and *do*, *perceive* and *enjoy*, does alone deserve this honourable Name of *Life*. So that this Expression denotes the *Affluence* of all that can render our Being and State truly desirable and happy.

Now we may conceive the *Blessedness* of the heavenly *Life*, as resulting,

Partly, From the Perfection of our Nature, and the most vigorous Exercise of our perfected Powers upon the noblest and most agreeable Objects.

Partly, From the Society and Converse of the heavenly Inhabitants.

Partly, From the Employment and Work of the heavenly State.

Partly, From the Beauty and Glory of the Place itself. And,

Partly, From the endless Duration of this Felicity.

I. We may consider the *Blessedness* of *Eternal Life*, as resulting, partly, *From the Perfection* of our Nature, and the most vigorous Exercise of our perfected Powers upon the noblest and most agreeable Objects.

For what can more conduce to render the Life of a reasonable Creature entirely blessed, than the highest Elevation of all its *rational* or *intellectual*, and *sensitive* or *corporeal* Faculties, and the most lively Exercise of them upon such Objects as are in themselves most excellent, and most capable to yield the highest Satisfaction to our most enlarged Desires and Expectations.

I here mention our *sensitive* or *corporeal*, as well as our *rational* or *intellectual* Powers, because I consider the *Body* as well as the *Soul*, as the Subject of this Happiness. And, accordingly, I shall consider them distinctly, and apart.

First, The Happiness of the heavenly Life will result from the Perfection of our Souls in all their *rational*

ational or intellectual Powers, and from the most vigorous Exercise of those perfected Powers on the most noble and agreeable Objects.

And here I must consider our intellectual Powers distinctly.

And,

I. One Ingredient of our future Happiness will be the Perfection of our Understandings by their vast Improvement in Divine Knowledge and Wisdom.

The Perfection of our Knowledge is by the Apostle Paul plainly intimated to be the noble and peculiar Privilege of our heavenly State, 1 Cor. xiii. 10, 12. For the great God has not in vain implanted in our Minds so unlimited a Desire after Knowledge, and so large a capacity of it. 'Tis true, indeed, here those Desires should be regulated, and we should bound all our Enquiries in the Matters of Religion within the compass of what God has thought fit to reveal by the *Light of Nature*, or that clearer one of *Supernatural Revelation*. And, indeed, all our Attempts here to go beyond that Line, by prying into Things unrevealed, are as ineffectual and dangerous, as they are presumptuous and arrogant. 'Tis sufficient here that we know as much as is necessary and useful for us in this *State of Trial*, in which we are *Probationers* for and *Candidates* of the Perfection and Glory of the *heavenly State*. But since in that future State, God has given us the Prospect and Hope of full satisfaction to those vast Desires of Knowledge that we feel in our own Minds, as the Reward of our faithful Improvement of those Measures of Divine Light he now communicates, we may justly aspire to it, and we may well reckon it as one considerable Branch of our future Perfection and Blessedness. For if the few obscure and imperfect Discoveries of Truth which we now make (though at the Expence of the most painful Study) afford a Pleasure so far surpassing all that sensual Enjoyments can yield, what an unspeakable Delight may we justly suppose will spring from that large *Extent of our Knowledge*, and from that *different manner of Knowing* that Heaven will raise us to; especially, when we consider that 'tis Truths of the highest Importance and Excellency that will then be the chief Entertainment of our Thoughts.

First, Our Knowledge will then be large in its Compass and Extent, and conversant about the most glorious Objects, the Contemplation and Discovery whereof is capable of yielding the highest satisfaction to our Minds.

We shall then fully know *the only true God*, and *Jesus Christ whom he hath sent*, whom to know fully is indeed *Life Eternal*, John xvii. 3.

And, O how ravishing will the clear Views of that infinitely amiable Being, in his adorable Perfections and marvellous Works, be to the Eye of a glorified Saint, when 'tis fortified to bear the dazzling Lustre of that most resplendent Object! So that well may the Scriptures so often represent it as one eminent part of our future Felicity, that *we shall see God*. And well may it be accounted the Happiness of the highest Angels themselves, that they *behold the face of their heavenly Father*, Matth. v. 8. Heb. xii. 14. Matth. xviii. 10. Alas! while we are here in this imperfect State, that blessed Being dwells in inaccessible Light, 1 Tim. vi. 16. The Object is too bright for our weak Eye to fix it self intensely upon. And what was said of our blessed Saviour, may be applied to the *Father of Lights*, *He shines in Darkness*, and the *Darkness comprehends him not*, John i. v. We have, with *Moses*, at best but a glimmering and transient View of his back-parts, Exod. xxxiii. 23. 'Tis but the faint Reflexion, or rather the dark Shadow of his illustrious Excellencies that we now behold. And when we would pry farther, when we attempt to take a nearer View of his immense Perfections, we do but find our Minds

confounded and lost, as he that would lift up his tender Eyes to behold the Sun at Noon-day, or would fathom a boundless Deep with a shallow Line, or grasp the Ocean it self in a Cockle-shell. So that we may well complain with *Job*; *Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a Portion is heard of him? But the Thunder of his Power who can understand?* Job xxvi. ult. What Transports of unknown Pleasure then will over-flow our Souls, when they enter into those Regions of Light, where we shall see the adorable face of God, Rev. xxii. 4. and where the manifestation of the Divine Glories will be incomparably clearer, and our elevated Minds more capable to bear that bright Discovery of them. Our Minds will no longer be involved in such a maze of Difficulties, to reconcile the Belief of the sacred *Three* with the *Unity* of the Divine Nature; or to form clear Conceptions of the Eternity and Immensity of his Being, though the one seems to run a Line parallel with the successive Motions of Time, and the other to co-exist with all the Parts of this extended Universe. Nay, I doubt not, but that our loftiest Thoughts of the Power, the Wisdom, the Goodness, the Purity and Justice, and other Attributes of God, will fall as far short of those that the Light of Heaven will furnish us with, as our childish Apprehensions do of the Judgment of our maturer Years. As the Apostle intimates, 1 Cor. xiii. 11. And 'tis not improbable, but that we shall in the heavenly Light behold many adorable Excellencies in the Divine Nature, which here we have no Discoveries, and consequently no Idea's of. So that the inexhaustible fulness of the Object will give perpetual and growing Entertainment to our intellectual Powers, and our purified Eye will ever find new Charms and Beauties in the contemplation of his boundless Glory. And in order to our clearer Apprehensions of the Divine Perfections, we shall doubtless have a more comprehensive View of those admirable Works of God which are designed to represent them to us. Many ingenious Persons have spent much of their Time with great Delight, in the Study of some part or other of the Works of Creation; such as the Contexture and Frame of the human Body, and the several parts of it; nay, of the meanest Insects; and have thought the Discoveries they made of the exquisite Skill of the Divine Artist, in the curious Formation of the meanest Animals, or of Plants, worth all their laborious Re-searches. What a noble Improvement then will it be to our glorified Minds, to have an entire View of the whole frame of Nature, in the admirable Order, and accurate Connexion, and regular Subserviency of its several parts, and the beauteous Harmony of the entire Structure! What a different thing will this glorious Universe appear, (when we behold those vast Bodies of Light, whose remote distance renders them almost imperceptible, and shall understand the amazing Number of Inhabitants that those superior Regions are replenished with) from what we now so commonly conceive of it, by almost wholly confining our Thoughts to this despicable spot and point of Earth! And truly, when we consider how little we can now trace or view of the Divine Excellencies in the visible Works of Creation, we have great reason to suppose that our perfected Spirits will have a far more comprehensive Knowledge of them, that their great Author may more fully reap that Tribute of Glory that's due to him from all the intelligent Beholders of his marvellous Works. And sure it will be no less delightful to view the whole Scheme of God's providential Administrations, and to see the bright Signatures of his matchless Perfections most legibly engraven upon them. Alas! now the *steps of God are in the deep*; his *Counsels are unsearchable*, and his *Ways past finding out*, Rom. xi. 33. There are manifold Riddles in Providence which we cannot unfold; many Difficulties we cannot solve; many intricate.

cate Mazes out of which our Minds cannot extricate themselves. We see but a small and broken part of that curious Piece, and that while 'tis but an imperfect Draught, and has not received the last Touches of the Divine Pencil. But with what a surprising Beauty will it appear, when we behold it perfect and entire! We shall then see that those Events that seemed to us most strange and unaccountable, were the Result of infinite Wisdom, that had marvellous Designs in them quite beyond our reach and view. We shall there be no longer at a loss in our Thoughts, why an infinitely gracious God suffered Sin and Death to enter into the World; why he permitted so early and so almost universal a degeneracy of Mankind, and that for so many Ages before and after the Flood; why he deferred so long the Incarnation and Coming of our blessed Saviour on the great Errand of our Recovery and Salvation; why he suffers so vast a part of Mankind to continue in Pagan Blindness, or Mahometan Impostures; nay, why he still abandons so great a part of the Christian Church to hateful Corruptions, or to persecuting Violence: When the (*Arcana Divini Imperii*) Secrets of the Divine Government are laid open, all these and the like perplexing Difficulties will vanish, these seeming Blemishes will disappear, and not only the *Justice* and *Holiness*, but even the *Wisdom* and *Goodness* of the Divine Conduct will appear unexceptionable. A bright Light will be darted from the whole Contexture upon those Passages of Divine Providence that now seem the darkest; and what we are now, in our Ignorance, ready to stumble at, and cavil against, we shall then be able to celebrate and admire. And, O with what unspeakable satisfaction shall we then read over the true History of the World, wherein all the Actions of Men shall be represented in their true Colours, nay, the secret Springs of them (their inward Thoughts and Intentions) disclosed, and from thence the Disposals and Determinations of Divine Providence concerning them be fully vindicated; his Wisdom and Justice, and Goodness; and all his rectoral Attributes shining out in them with an unspotted and amazing Glory! Nay, with what particular Pleasure shall we look back on all the past Dispensations of God towards our selves, when we shall fully understand the reason of all his various Dealings with us, and shall see that all Events (even those that seemed most cross and repugnant to our natural Desires) have by his steady Conduct of them effectually conspired for our greatest and eternal Good!

Nay, doubtless the Light of Heaven will be the best Expounder of the (*τὰ δύσγνωστα*) things that are hard to be understood in the Divine Oracles; and will give us a far clearer and more extensive Knowledge of the Mysteries of Divine Grace, especially of the astonishing Work of our Redemption and Salvation by his incarnate Son, than we can now attain. There are vast *Dimensions* of Divine Love which our narrow Minds cannot now stretch themselves unto, but which we shall then, *with all Saints*, more fully comprehend, *Eph. iii. 18, 19.* We shall then see another Beauty in the gradual degrees of Divine Revelation vouchsafed to his Church, and in the different Oeconomy of it, than in our present Darkness we can behold; so that the regular Process of Divine Grace in the gradual Advances of his Church from its State of *Infancy* and *Weakness* to that of *Manhood* and *Perfection*, will appear as surprising and glorious, as that of his Wisdom in forming this material World out of a dark and confused Chaos, and bringing it by degrees into that orderly and beauteous frame of Things that we now behold. Nay, we shall then more distinctly understand what we owe to the holy Spirit of God for those his gracious and sanctifying Operations which have tempered our Souls for the Glories of the heavenly State; and the consistency thereof with the freedom of our Wills, will be no longer so puzzling a Difficulty to our Thoughts.

But above all, we shall have the clearest Views of the Divine Glory as it shines to us in the face of his incarnate Son, who is the true Image of the invisible God, the brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, *1 Col. 15. Heb. i. 3.* And it will be no inconsiderable part of our Felicity to behold him in the transcendent Glory of his exalted State, who for our sakes stooped to so amazing a degree of Humiliation and Abasement. (As our Lord intimates in his Prayer for us, *John xvii. 24. Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am, that they may behold my Glory which thou hast given me.*) Especially, when we consider 'tis highly probable that the Divine Glory will in this clearest Mirror of it appear more tempered and accommodated to the sight of such finite Creatures. For Angels themselves seem incapable to bear the direct Beams of it, and therefore are represented as *vailing their faces.*

And having mentioned those *holy Angels*, I shall subjoin, That it will be a very satisfying Addition to, and noble Improvement of our Knowledge, to understand the Nature and eminent Powers, the Dignity and Offices of those blessed Spirits, and to behold the admirable Order and Government of the superior World. We shall then see how those vast heavenly Hosts are ranged, what Laws are enacted in the heavenly Kingdom, and how punctually they are observed. And we shall there understand our particular Obligation to those *ministring Spirits* for all the Assistance and Relief, the Protection and Defence, the Direction and Conduct we have received from their charitable *Ministration* to us, while we were the *Heirs of Salvation*, exposed to the Conflicts and Assaults of Infernal Powers. And, O what amazing and ravishing Discoveries will the Light of Eternity surprise us with in reference to that unseen World of *Spirits*, of which our Notices here are so few and dark!

And to add no more under this Head, we shall then far better *know our selves.* Our glorified Spirits will be no longer such Strangers to their own Nature and Capacities, to their various Faculties and Operations, and to the Reason of their present dependance on the Body, and the various Sensations that arise from their strict Union and Commerce with it. Nor will they be as ignorant of their spiritual and heavenly, as they now are of these earthly and corruptible Bodies.

And sure, our Minds must be strangely stupid, and insensible of their highest Capacities, if we should not esteem their vast Improvement in so excellent Knowledge as a very valuable part of our Felicity. He is foolishly ignorant of the true worth of Things that does not account such heavenly Wisdom more *precious than Rubies*, and infinitely more valuable than all earthly Treasures.

But,

Secondly, The Happiness that will result from the vast Extent of our Knowledge will appear to be the greater, if we consider our *different manner of knowing* in the heavenly State.

For it will so far differ from our present, that the Apostle saith of our present Knowledge, *It shall vanish, and be done away.* And accordingly, to illustrate the great difference thereof, he tells us, *Now we see through a glass, darkly (or, in a riddle) but then face to face; Now we know in part, but then we shall know as we are known,* *1 Cor. xiii. 8, 10, 12.*

Now we see through a Glass; a *Glass* we know is but an obscuring Medium. And perhaps the Apostle may here allude to the viewing of vastly distant Objects through a Perspective. Though the Glass of Divine Revelation may greatly assist the Eye of Reason to discover what it could not of itself discern, yet the sight of a distant Object through it is far short of the View of an Object brought near to our naked Eye; as particularly, of a Man whom we behold face

face, without any thing to intercept or darken our light. Even so much shall our Vision of heavenly Objects in the Mansions of Light transcend those comparatively obscure Notices of them that Divine Revelation it self does here convey to us.

Now we see Things [*ἐν αἰνίγματι*] darkly (or as your Margin more strictly renders it, in a Riddle) i. e. we now talk and conceive of the great Things of the unseen World by *Parables* and *Similitudes*. Our Knowledge is but a Kind of sacred *Hieroglyphicks*, a meer artificial Thing. We make use of *material Images* to represent *spiritual Objects*, and have scarce any Ideas of them but what we borrow from, and what carry an Allusion to *sensible Things*. And accordingly, the Spirit of God, in Condescension to our Infirmary, speaks to us in our own Language, as we, when we converse with Children or ignorant Persons, are often forced to use such Expressions as are less proper, to accommodate ourselves the better to their weak Capacities. But we shall have no Need of these metaphorical Representations of heavenly Objects when we come to have an immediate View of them. And those Ideas of spiritual Things which the Light of Heaven will furnish us with, will as far exceed our low Apprehensions of them here; as the Sight of a pleasant Country with our *naked Eye*, exceeds the Description of it in a *Map*; or as the View of a *living Person* transcends the Knowledge we can have of him by seeing his *Picture* or his *Shadow*.

Now we know but in Part. We discern little more than the surface of Things. All our Notions are inadequate, and bear no Proportion to what is knowable in the Things themselves. So that all the Knowledge we here attain does but the more fully discover to us our far greater remaining Ignorance, and in that respect *increases our Sorrow*.

But we shall then know as we are known. If we understand the Words in reference to God, That we shall know him as we are known of him; no doubt we must take them only in a comparative Sense, to suppose a bare *Similitude*, but no *Equality* between his Knowledge of us and ours of him. But if we understand them in reference to those created Spirits which are the blessed Inhabitants of Heaven, the Expressions may be taken in a more strict and absolute Sense. Our Knowledge of them will be as full and adequate as theirs of us. Our intellectual Powers shall be refined and enlarged as well as theirs, and consequently, as capable to extend to the vast Circle and Compass of intelligible Objects. There will be a Perfection in our Knowledge as that is opposed to all culpable or reproachful Ignorance. Some render the Words, *We shall know as we are made to know*, and suppose them to import a vast Enlargement of our intellectual Powers. But of this I have already touch'd.

I shall only add (as consequent on what has been suggested) one Difference more of our future from our present manner of Knowing, viz.

Our present Knowledge is in a great measure the Fruit of unweari'd and laborious Studies. We get this Food of Souls, as we do that of our Bodies, by the Sweat of our Brows. 'Tis by a long Train of Discourse and rational Deductions, that we pursue our busy Search after Truth; and are forced to trace the obscure Steps of it through a Labyrinth of Errors with extraordinary Caution. So that a great Part of our Life is often spent before we can lay up any considerable Stock of true Knowledge. And Men of the greatest Learning can sensibly renew the Wise Man's Complaint, *Of making (and it may be added, of reading) many Books there is no End, and much Study is a Weariness to the Flesh*, xii *Eccles.* 12. But in that State of Future Perfection, our Knowledge will be far more by way of *Intuition* than tedious *Disquisition* or *Reasoning*. The Light of Heaven will to a glorified Saint in a few Moments discover more than the greatest *Philosophers* or *Divines*

can here pretend to know. The clear Manifestation of heavenly Objects, and the Enlargement of our visive Faculties to perceive them, will set us above the Need of that laborious Instruction that must now be used with us. Those *Treasures* of Divine Wisdom will there lie more open to us, and within our reach, which we must here painfully dig and toil for. And if there be such a thing in Heaven as a Progress in Knowledge by any Exercise of our reasoning Faculty (as the Scripture seems to intimate there is in that of *Angels* themselves. See iii. *Ephes.* 10. i *Pet.* i. 12.) No doubt, as the Exercise thereof will be more easy and successful, so it will be attended with the highest Pleasure that new Discoveries of valuable Truth can bring to an inquisitive Mind; whereas here, on the contrary, our greatest Pains are often sadly disappointed. After a tedious Search after Truth we are forced to return with a *Non-Inventus*; and the Field of Learning proves but an ungrateful Toil that does not answer the Tiller's Care. Whereas, there our thirsty Souls shall ever drink at the Fountain-Head, and in the Divine Light shall see Light (in a rich and satisfying Abundance) xxxvi *Psal.* 9.

I would not hereby suggest, That we shall have no Occasion for the Use of our reasoning Faculty in that future State, in order to our Progress in Divine Knowledge. *Holy Angels* themselves are represented by the Apostle Peter, as desirous to look into the great Mysteries of Redeeming Love and Grace, i *Pet.* i. 12. And another Apostle tells us, That the manifold Wisdom of God is made known by the Church to the Principalities and Powers in the heavenly Places, iii. *Ephes.* 10. Both these Passages seem plainly to intimate to us, That even in this higher Order of intellectual Beings their Knowledge is progressive; and that from the Dispensations of God towards his Church here below, when exhibited to their View, they gain a fuller Insight into the Depths of Divine Grace and Love displayed therein, that fill them with new Admiration and Delight. And if the Knowledge of those exalted Spirits may admit of Increase by new and clearer Discoveries, and the Use of their reasonable Powers in them, we may much more suppose the same concerning ours. If their Minds are but finite, much more are ours. And there is both in the boundless Perfections of God, and in the unconceivable Variety of his great and glorious Works that fill this spacious Universe, abundant Matter for our delightful Contemplation, and for such new Discoveries, as by increasing our Knowledge shall minister new ravishing Pleasures to our Minds and furnish us with fresh grounds of Adoration and Praise. And we have no ground to think, that our reasoning Faculty (which is as essential to our Souls as their self determining Power) will be useless and unemployed in that Future State. And if we admit the Conjectures of our modern Philosophers, who suppose the planetary Bodies that move about the Sun, to be inhabited; and the fixed Stars to be as so many Suns that have such planetary Bodies attending them, and those replenished with reasonable Inhabitants, what a vast Field of Knowledge will our Minds have to expatiate in, and thereby to enlarge their Apprehensions of the Glory of the great Maker and Ruler of the Universe, as displayed in all the Parts of his unbounded Dominion! And our Understandings will be then entirely freed from those Prepossessions and Prejudices, that so often mislead them here, and make them like a distempered Eye, to which the Objects they look upon appear in false Colours.

And sure (my Brethren) if you have any commendable Ambition after Divine Wisdom, this one Ingredient of the heavenly Felicity should abundantly endear it to us. We should be willing to close the Eyes of this Body on this material World, and all its transitory Beauties, that we may open those of our Minds to behold the ravishing Glory of the Blessed God, and the incomparable Beauty of the intellectual

and heavenly World. Who would not exchange this artificial and shadowy, this dark and confused glimpse of Things, for the real and solid, the clear and satisfying Light of Heaven! Who would not desire to see face to face, and to know as he is known!

But to proceed,

II. Another Ingredient of our future Blessedness (relating to our Souls) will arise from the perfection of our Wills, and particularly from the Exercises of our perfected Wills in the most vigorous Acts of Divine Love.

Our Wills shall be entirely moulded into a sinless Conformity to the Nature and Will of God, this being the happy and necessary Result of our perfect Vision of him. And accordingly, when the Apostle John gives us that summary Account of what we do here know concerning the Glory and Happiness of our future State, he conjoins these two Branches of it. *But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is,* 1 John iii. 2. And, indeed, this Transfiguration of our Souls into a sinless Resemblance of that blessed Being, does exalt them to the highest Dignity, and lays the Foundation of their Happiness in their own Temper. And no wonder it should be effected by our immediate Vision of him. For his adorable Excellencies have a powerful transforming Influence, according to the measure wherein they are beheld. And if we that now see but in a glass the glory of the Lord, are yet changed into the same Image from Glory unto Glory, 2 Cor. iii. 18. What a superlative degree of Glory and Likeness shall we be advanced to, when we behold face to face! 1 Cor. xiii. 12. Then shall the Prayer of our Lord be accomplished in its full Extent, wherein he requests, *That Believers may be One, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be One in us,* John xvii. 21. See also 22, 23. No doubt we must, as to our selves, understand the Expression of an Unity of Will and Affection. And, indeed, the Will of glorified Saints shall entirely answer the Will of God, as the Impression on the Wax does the Seal, or as the Echo does the Voice, (defectively indeed, but truly without any culpable Discord and Disagreement.) All these holy and heavenly Qualities shall be then raised to their utmost Vigour and Perfection in us, that will render us truly amiable and god-like Creatures. We shall then, indeed, (according to our Saviour's Promise) shine out as the Sun in the Kingdom of our Father (with an unspotted brightness) Matth. xiii. 43. For if the material Sun can by shining on a duly tempered Cloud form so bright an Image of it self, that the Copy shall so much resemble the Original; we may as easily suppose that those warm Beams that are immediately darted from this heavenly Sun on prepared Souls, will leave the full and lively Impression of his own beautiful Image upon them. And, O happy Souls, whose Wills are thus entirely moulded into the perfect Will of God! If the perfect fulfilling of our Wills can make us happy, those must needs be so, who have no Will different from his, for his Will shall always stand. To such a perfected Spirit there is no room left for any impatient Wishes and uneasy Desires, or that Misery that springs from the disappointment of them. When we perfectly know what is the good Pleasure of God, and entirely approve it and acquiesce in it without one repining Thought, or contrary Wish, we shall in some measure partake of his Blessedness, whose glory it is to Will always what is best, and to have what he so Wills certainly accomplished.

And as our Wills shall be thus perfectly conformed to the Divine, so they shall be exercised in the most vigorous Acts of Divine Love. Charity or Love you know is the Grace which the Apostle Paul tells us will abide, when Prophecies fail, and Tongues cease, and Knowledge vanishes, and Faith and Hope is turned into Vision and Enjoyment, 1 Cor. xiii. 8, 9, ult. And that Divine Love which is here but as smoking Flax will be

there a most bright and active Flame. Nor will it there vent it self as it does often here in mournful Desires after an absent God, but in the most satisfying Complacency in that Eternal Presence of his, where there is fulness of Joy and ever-flowing Rivers of Pleasure. With what inexpressible Raptures of Delight will a glorified Soul satiate all its Desires in him, the Fountain of all Good! With how strict an Adherence of inviolable Affection will it fix on him, as the only Center of its Rest! And how entirely will it acquiesce in him, as its all-sufficient Portion for ever! With how irresistible a force will the bright Discoveries of Divine Glory and rich Communications of Divine Love, then attract our Hearts to him, the amiablest and best of Beings! What ardours of Gratitude towards him shall our Breasts be inspired with, when we fully possess all those unconceivable Things that his boundless Love has prepared for them that truly love him! And how will those Affections of ours that are now so divided by running out towards so many created Objects in which, as Streams, we taste something of the goodness of God, be then happily united, and flow with a full Current towards him, the infinite Fountain, who is all in all? And, O how unspeakable Contentment must needs result from the entire Fruition of him in whom there is all we can possibly desire or expect! Who can express the Happiness of a Soul imparadised in the Bosom of God, and as it were clasping about him with the pure Embraces of the most fervent Devotion and Love for ever! Especially, when we consider that glorified Saints not only perfectly love God on the account of his being infinitely gracious to them, but even for his own infinite Amiability and Excellency it self. So that they contemplate his invariable Glory and Blessedness with the highest satisfaction, and are perfectly pleased in the pleasing of his Will for ever. Even their own Happiness has a far sweeter relish, considered as a means to illustrate the glory of his Goodness in the Communication of it. So justly may we look upon the Exercise of perfected Love to God as the most valuable part of our future Felicity and Reward. For as no Act of our reasonable Nature is more inseparably attended with Pleasure than that of Love; so none affords more ravishing Delight, than Love thus entirely fix'd on its highest and most deserving Object. Holy Souls are then in the true Element of Bliss, when they are continually ascending to him in the Flames of heavenly Affection, and aspiring to the nearest Union with him, the true Object and Spring of their satisfying Felicity.

I might, indeed, here consider their Love as exercised towards our blessed Saviour, and towards the whole heavenly Society. But of that I may have occasion to speak more hereafter.

Therefore,

III. Another Ingredient of our future Blessedness (relating to our Souls) results from the perfection of our active Power, and the most vigorous Exercise thereof.

'Tis the glory of holy Angels that they excel in strength, Psal. ciii. And I doubt not but this will be in part the Felicity of the Saints above. Here, indeed, our Souls are miserably impotent and weak, listless and sluggish. And no wonder, when they are imprisoned in such a frail and feeble Body, and clogg'd with so unweildy a Lump of Clay. So that we cannot hence judge of the true Vigour and Activity of a Soul, when disencumbered from this Load of Flesh, or when re-united to a Body whose Agility is suited to the quickness of its Motions. No, we shall then be like to the blessed Angels, those swift Messengers of the heavenly King. We shall be all Life and Wing in his blessed Service, and do his Will without any thing of that weariness and dulness that we now so oft complain of. We shall then, indeed, in the highest sense, mount up with Wings as Eagles, we shall run and not be weary, walk

and not faint, Isa. xl. 13. What particular Services may be assigned us, we now know little of; but have no ground to doubt, but that all our *active Powers* will be suitably employed, and whatever Work is assigned, we shall be capable of performing with the utmost Vivacity. But of this I shall have occasion to speak more, when I consider our Happiness, as resulting from our *heavenly Employment and Work*.

I shall close this Discourse with entering on the I. Practical Reflexion on this Subject, viz. If there be such a State of future Blessedness for the Righteous, let us often meditate upon it.

This is a Subject every way worthy of our Thoughts; most delightful in it self, most necessary to us, and of admirable Influence and Use when duly realized to our Minds.

1. 'Tis a Subject most delightful in it self.

For what can be more grateful Entertainment to the Thoughts of an Heaven-born Spirit, than the Contemplation of that Heaven it self from whence it first descended, and to which it has by Divine Grace recovered a new Alliance and Title? What the Apostle Peter said when he only saw a glimpse of the Celestial Glory in the Transfiguration of Christ, and in his Converse with Moses and Elias, we may as justly say, when our Minds are intensely fix'd on that

Glory it self, 'Tis good for us to be here. If Moses so gladly climb'd Mount Nebo that he might have a Prospect of the promised Land, how gladly should we entertain and feed our Eyes with the Prospect of the heavenly Canaan! And sure, when we have so vast and glorious an Object in our View, it should powerfully arrest our Thoughts; our Minds should dwell upon it, and be as unwilling to turn from it to the despicable Vanities of this Earth, as we would to turn our Eyes from beholding a magnificent Palace to fix them on a Dungbill.

And sure the frequent Contemplation of that heavenly Felicity should be especially delightful to the Heirs of it. If those can view a large earthly Inheritance, or temporal Crown with great pleasure, who shortly hope to possess the one, and wear the other; sure, the Candidates and Expectants of Heaven should feel far higher satisfaction in the Prospect of that incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading Inheritance, which they shall so soon enjoy, and of that Immortal Crown that shall e'er long adorn their conquering Heads. Sure, whoever banish Heaven out of their Thoughts, the Righteous should never do it, who have so much occasion to triumph in the prospect of that Time, when being adjudged to, they shall enter on the Possession of Eternal Life.

S E R M O N XX.

On the Happiness of HEAVEN.

Matth. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.



HAVE from the latter Clause of this Verse, made some Progress in the Description of that State of Endless Perfection and Blessedness which the Righteous shall be adjudged to, and which is so often in Scripture called *Eternal Life*.

First, I considered the *Negative Part* of that future Blessedness, consisting in our entire Exemption from all Evils, both Moral and Natural, both of Sin and Misery. And this is significantly stiled *Salvation*.

Secondly, I came to consider the *Positive Part* of it; which is especially intended by this Expression of *Eternal Life*, which denotes the affluence of all that can render Life desirable or valuable.

And here,

I. We may consider the future Blessedness of the Righteous, as resulting partly, from the Perfection of our entire Nature, and the most vigorous Exercise of our perfected Powers on the noblest and most agreeable Objects.

And,

First, From the Perfection of our Souls, and their reasonable Powers.

Thus,

1. Our Understandings will be perfected by a vast Improvement in Divine Knowledge and Wisdom.

2. Our Wills shall be perfectly conformed to the Will of God, and raised to the most vigorous Exercises of Divine Love.

3. Our active Power shall be endued with the highest Vigour, and employed in the noblest Service and Work.

I now come to consider,

Secondly, That part of the Perfection of our Nature that shall arise from the Perfection of our glorified Bodies

For my Text plainly leads me to consider the Blessedness of the Righteous, not merely as begun at Death, but as complete after the general Resurrection and Judgment. And, indeed, 'tis then only that our entire Nature shall be possessed of *Eternal Life*. Till then, one part of us remains as the Spoils of Death, and Prey of the Grave. Till then, that last Enemy continues his seeming Victory and Triumph, our Bodies being detained as Captives in his dark Prison and ignominious Bonds. And 'tis not till this last Enemy be conquered, and our Bodies rescued from his Dominion and Power, that Mortality is entirely swallowed up of Life.

C c c

Life, and the Happiness of a glorified Saint fully consummated. So that this part of it will necessarily fall under our Consideration.

'Tis true, indeed, we can at present understand little of the *Nature*, and excellent *Qualities* of a glorified and heavenly Body. And though the *Characters* which the Scriptures give of it, represent it as free from those manifold Infirmities and Imperfections, which are the great disadvantages of our present earthly Bodies; yet we can draw little from them of any positive Idea of it, and therefore must observe the Apostle's Caution, not to be over-curious in our Enquiries, *How the Dead are raised up, or with what Body they come?* 1 Cor. xv. 35. But yet we may be allowed to follow the Light of Divine Revelation so far as it leads us, and to trace the Steps of its inspired Penmen in the Description they give us of our *Celestial*, as they are distinguished from our *Terrestrial Bodies*, 1 Cor. xv. 40. Our present earthly Bodies are corruptible and mortal, subject to manifold Diseases and Miseries, and those the Harbingers of their final Dissolution. Even the exquisite Formation of their various Organs serves to give them a quicker sense of almost innumerable Pains; and how admirable soever their Structure may be, they are at best but *Houses of Clay, whose Foundation is in the Dust*. But our heavenly Bodies are Incorruptible and Immortal, suited to the Endless Duration of those Souls, whose Mansions they are designed to be; they will not be liable to any of those frequent Disorders, and dolorous Pains that we now so often feel and groan under; they will only minister to the pure and innocent Pleasures of a glorified Soul, ver. 42.

Our earthly Bodies are comparatively vile, Phil. iii. ult. There is a Mass of Corruption and Filth within, as many loathsome Distempers often give us very sensible Conviction. And we know they will e'er long be a ghastly Spectacle, and turn to noisome Putrefaction. But our heavenly Bodies will be unconceivably glorious when fashioned like to that of our exalted Saviour, Phil. iii. ult. And how resplendent the Glory of his is, we may in part conceive from a transient glimpse thereof exhibited in his Transfiguration on the Mount. And there we read, *That his Face shone as the Sun, and his Raiment was white as the Light*, Matth. xvii. 2. What a radiant Lustre then will be darted from the transformed Bodies of the Righteous when they shall shine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father! (as our Saviour speaks, Matth. xiii. 43.) And, indeed, such lucid Bodies refined from the dross of this Earth, to an æthereal Purity and Brightness, are most suitable to those Regions of Light into which we shall be transplanted, ver. 43.

Our earthly Bodies are weak and feeble, ver. 43. They are (comparatively speaking) a sluggish and unweildy Lump of Clay, confined to this Earth on which we tread, and incapable of soaring higher. Their Motions are dull and slow; their Activity small and inconsiderable; their Strength despicable and frail, not only liable to decline through the growing Infirmities of Age, but to be suddenly broke by innumerable Diseases, and even crushed before the Moth it self, Job iv. 19.

But our heavenly Bodies shall be endued with admirable Agility and Vigour. Their Constitution firm and durable; their Motions swift; their Sensations lively; their Force and Activity vast and marvellous, without any alloy of weakness and weariness. They shall no longer be to our Souls as a Prison or Clog, that ties them down to such a spot and point of this Earth, but rather as Wines to transport them with speed to any part of this visible World, or of the invisible superior Regions. Moses and Elias could, on the Prayer of Christ, quickly descend from the heavenly Mansions to Mount Tabor, and with the same ease ascend again, notwithstanding the unconceivable distance between this Earth, and that Third Heaven, which is the Seat of the Blessed, 2 Cor. xii. 2. How

quick are the Motions of Light and Sounds, almost equalling those of our very Thoughts? And from those we may form the most probable Conceptions of the extraordinary Agility of our glorified Bodies.

Again, our earthly Bodies are Natural or Animal ones, ver. 44. i. e. they are Bodies wholly framed and suited for the low Functions of this animal Life, which is common to us with the Beasts that perish. And, accordingly they are furnished with various Appetites, for which suitable Provision is made by the Bounty of Divine Providence. They have also several Organs and Members adapted only for those uses. And our present bodily Life must be maintained by Meat and Drink, Rest and Sleep. By these continual Repairs must these frail Tabernacles of Clay be kept from sinking into Ruin. And, alas! how great a part of our Time here is consumed in busy Cares and Labours to provide for these perishing Bodies what is needful to accommodate their various Necessities, and sustain their decaying Life!

But our heavenly Bodies will be spiritual Ones, i. e. not only Bodies that resemble Spirits in their Activity and Vigour, but such as are suited to the Operations of an immortal Spirit in its highest State of Excellency and Perfection. Bodies adapted to those superior heavenly Regions, which are the proper Element and Habitation of perfected Spirits. And hence our Saviour corrects the gross Apprehensions the Jews had of our raised Bodies, (when they disputed about her whom seven Brothers had successively married, whose Wife she should be at the Resurrection?) by telling them, *That in the Resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the Angels of God in Heaven*, Matth. xxii. 30. And how vast a difference in the Constitution and Frame of our Bodies, and in their manner of Sensation and Motion, is requisite to fit them to be the Instruments and Vehicles of a glorified Soul in its angelical State, we are not now able to conceive, but may justly apprehend it to be very great and marvellous.

In a word, our heavenly Bodies will then be so far from being to our Souls a Dark-Lantern, an uneasy Prison, a cumbersome Weight, as this corruptible Flesh now is; that they will be every way subservient to their noblest Operations, and most refined Delights, and therefore happy Sharers with them in the Work and Joys, in the Glory and Bliss of the Celestial State.

Thus will our whole Nature be perfected, and its exalted Powers be exercised upon the most excellent and agreeable Objects.

And this is the first Ingredient of our positive Blessedness.

But,

II. We may consider this future Blessedness of the Righteous, as partly resulting from the Society and Converses of the heavenly Inhabitants.

Man is a sociable Creature, framed for Converse, and capable of relishing all the entertaining Pleasures of it. And the more excellent and communicative those are with whom we converse, the greater are the Advantages and Delights of it. Now there is every thing in the heavenly State that can conspire to render the Converses of it beneficial and pleasurable to us.

We shall there be admitted to the most intimate and endeared Communion with the blessed God, the Fountain of Light and Life, Love and Joy. We shall then satiate our Souls with the fulness of Joy that is in his beatifick Presence, and let them run adrift in that Ocean of Pleasures that is at his right hand for ever more, Psal. xvi. ult. I have already mentioned the Happiness that will result from our clearest Vision of God, and most ardent Love to him, when he shall most fully discover his attractive Glory, and make us partake of the richest Communications of his boundless Love. And sure those must be unconceivably happy who immediately dwell

in that God, who is infinite and over flowing Love, 1 John iv. 8. Especially, when our Souls shall be opened and enlarged to receive the reviving Rays, and refreshing streams in the most plenteous Effusion of them. All the Influences and Effects of the felicitating Love of God which we now partake of, are but like the glimmering Light of the Sun, that pierces through some Crevices into the House when the Windows are shut. (So little are our Souls capable to receive while they are confined to this dark Cell.) But there all Obstructions shall be removed, our own Capacities enlarged, and we shall (as one well expresses it) *with open face behold the open face of glorifying Love for ever.* And, O what a Life of unknown, unconceivable Delight, shall we live for ever in the Presence, and Bosom, and under the incessant Influx of his diffusive Eternal Love, the true source of all Perfection and Blessedness!

And sure it will be no small part of our Happiness to be admitted to the *Presence and Converse* of our Exalted Saviour, as clothed with our Nature.

If good old Simeon was so transported at the sight of our blessed Lord in the Flesh, that he was willing to close his Eyes on this World, when they had beheld the Salvation of God, Luke ii. 28, 29, 30. How much more ravishing will it then be, to behold him enthroned in Heaven, when he has compleated that great Work of the Salvation of his Israel, which he here came to lay the Foundation of? If Thomas, when he saw him risen again from the Dead, was in such an Extasy of Delight, that he cries out with devout Affection, *My Lord, and My God,* John xx. 27, 28. And if the rest of the Disciples did, with the like sensible Emotion of holy Joy, behold his *Ascension unto Heaven,* Luke xxiv. lii. How much more joyous will it be to behold him *sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high,* and see that transcendent amazing Glory (far superior to that of angelical Principalities and Powers) to which he is in our Nature advanced! So that well may our blessed Lord pray for this as one considerable Branch of our future Felicity, *That we may be where he is, and behold the Glory which the Father has given him,* John xvii. 24. And if Peter, when he beheld but a transient glimpse of the Glory of Christ in his Transfiguration on the Mount, felt such an astonishing Transport as made him forget the World and himself, and *speak he knew not what;* how much more surprising and ravishing will his Glory appear, when we see it in its brightest Lustre, and when we our selves shall feel the transforming Efficacy of that glorious Sight to render us *like to him,* 1 John ii. 3. How delightful to behold, nay, clasp in our Arms that merciful Saviour and Friend of Souls, in whom we have believed and trusted, whom we have loved and served, and to whose unparalell'd Love our Obligations are so vast and unconceivable! How ravishing to hear from his own blessed Lips all the amazing Wonders of his Love, in order to our fuller Comprehension of the height and depth, and length and breadth of it, and the more ardent Exercise of our inflamed Love to him! And much more to enjoy all the perfected Fruits and entire Purchase of his dying Love, and that probably communicated through him, as the *Mediator of Fruition* there as well as of Purchase here. And this, I think, to be very fitly illustrated by that excellent Divine, Mr. Baxter, by this obvious Similitude. "Look (saith he) upon the Sun, and think thus with thy self, how wonderful is the Emanation of this Sun! Its Motion, Light and Heat, communicated to so many Millions of Creatures all over the Earth, and in the Seas. What if all these Beams of Light and Heat, were proportionable Beams of Knowledge and Love and Joy. And that all Creatures under the Sun had from its Influx as much Wisdom, Love and Joy, as they have Light, Heat and Motion; would not then the Earth be as a World of Angels, or a Heaven!

Even so, Christ the Sun of Glory, will by his powerful Influence send forth Life and Light, and joyful Love, upon all the Blessed from the face of God." O! how unspeakable then will the Glory and Felicity of that superior World, and its dignified Inhabitants be, on whom he will thus shine for ever! If therefore, though now we see not our blessed Saviour, yet our Faith in him, and Expectations from him can even now make us *rejoyce with Joy unspeakable and full of Glory,* 1 Pet. i. 8. O! what an height of over-flowing Joy shall our Souls be raised to, when he shall receive us as his persevering Followers, into his immediate Presence, and tenderest Embraces; when he shall place us with himself on his triumphant Throne, (Rev. iii. 21.) and make us, his Members, the perpetual Monuments of his matchless Love, in whose Glory and Blessedness, he, our exalted Head, shall be *admired and glorified for ever!* 2 Thess. i. 10. O joyful Day, when the Nuptials of the Lamb are to be celebrated, when the Church, as his prepared Spouse, being *arrayed in fine Linnen* (even that of spotless Innocence and Righteousness) Rev. xix. 7, 8. being glorious with unblemished Purity, and adorned with all heavenly Qualities, Eph. v. 27. shall be presented to him the heavenly Bridegroom; and as the *Bridegroom rejoyces over the Bride,* so will he *rejoyce over us with Joy, he will rest in his Love, he will rejoyce over us with singing,* Isa. lxii. 5. Zeph. iii. 17. Well may we say with the inspired Evangelical Prophet, when he had this represented in Vision to him, *Blessed are they which are called to this Marriage-Supper of the Lamb,* and shall partake in all the Entertainments and Pleasures of that heavenly Solemnity! Rev. xix. 9.

And we may farther account it a considerable Addition to the Blessedness of the heavenly State, that we shall there converse with Angels, and glorified Saints.

How, indeed, we shall converse with Angels, (those unembodied Spirits) we do not yet know, but yet have no reason to doubt of the Thing it self. Perfected Spirits are of vast Activity, and may have manifold ways of communicating their Thoughts and Mind to one another, that we can have no present Conception of. So that we may justly account the Communion of the heavenly Inhabitants far more extensive and quick, than that of Souls confined to this Clod of Earth, and to this Dark-Lanthorn of the Body. Those Stars in Glory can easily shine to one another. Nor need we fear lest any of those excellent Spirits should disdain our Converse because they are of a superior Order and Rank. Those Angels that now account themselves our *Fellow-Servants* here, Rev. xix. 10. will not refuse to make us their happy Associates there. Those that now rejoyce in our Conversion, Luke xv. 10. will then triumph in our final Salvation; they'll gladly convoy our departing Souls to the Mansions of Bliss, and congratulate our Admission to the honours and glories of the heavenly Court. And, O how instructive and delightful may we justly imagine the Converse of those heavenly Sages to be!

And sure it will administer an inexpressible Delight to us to be admitted to the familiar Society of those Patriarchs and Prophets, and Apostles, and all those eminent Servants of God, who in every successive Age have shone as *Lights in this dark World,* and are now translated to an *higher Orb.* Nay, to regain the Society of our Christian Relations and Friends that have been our Fellow-Soldiers here in the same spiritual Warfare, but are now possessed of the Immortal Crown, and have before us entered into Everlasting Rest. O joyful meeting, when all the Children of God, that were dispersed abroad (in several Ages, and several parts of this Earth) shall all be gathered into *one general Assembly and Church!* When the vast Convention of all, whose Names are listed in the heavenly Rolls, shall be compleated;

not

not one Member being wanting in the mystical Body of Christ! The Conversation of wise and faithful, dear and intimate Friends and Fellow-Christians, is even here one of the principal and noblest Pleasures of human Life. Their Presence, their mutual Aspects, and obliging useful Discourses, are a sweet and charming Entertainment! But, O how unconceivably more ravishing will the happy Intercourse be between glorified Saints, in whom all that shining Wisdom, all that spotless Innocence and Purity, all that god-like Benignity and Love which are capable to endear it, are found in their highest Perfection; and all that Ignorance and Folly, and Unkindness that might allay the Pleasure of it, are entirely abolished! And if now it be so pleasant to behold Brethren dwell together in Unity on Earth, *Psal. cxxxiii. 1.* How much more to behold the perfect Unity of the concordant heavenly Society, when the Prayer of Christ for them shall be fully answered, That they may be all One in God and him! *John xvii. 21.* All one, by an entire Harmony in their Judgments, Wills, and Practice! All cemented in perfect Love to their God and Saviour, and perfect Love to one another! And how will that entire Union of Affection as it were render the common Happiness of the whole heavenly Society, in some measure the particular Happiness of every one! All those Stars in the Celestial Orb will (like those observed by Astronomers in the Milky Way) shine with one common undivided Light, each receiving an Addition to its own Lustre from the Brightness of others. And of this we may observe some Emblem and Specimen in the admirable Power of Divine Love, when kindled in the Hearts of the first Converts to Christianity. For we read of them, That the Multitude of them that believed were of one Heart and one Soul, neither said any of them that ought of the Things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common, *Acts iv. 32.* And if imperfect Love could so entirely unite the Affections and Interests of imperfect Saints, how much more glorious Effects will perfect Love produce in glorified Ones! They will be so far from looking on the Excellency and Dignity of their Fellow-Saints with an envious Eye, as rather to esteem the Happiness of others, an Accession to their own. For every Vessel of Divine Grace shall be filled with Glory, though their Capacity of receiving it may be different. And who that beholds the calamitous Contentions of this jarring World, nay, the deplorable Divisions and Animosities of the Militant Church, would not think with pleasure of that uninterrupted Concord and Peace of the heavenly Society, which is the excellent Effect of convincing Light, and uniting Love!

But,

III. Another Part of the Future Blessedness of the Righteous will result from the noble Employment and Work of the heavenly Society.

What that will be is in Part intimated to us.

No doubt it will be one Part of our happy Employment to join with the whole heavenly Community and Choir in the joyful Celebration of the Divine Praises. This is frequently represented to us as the Work of holy Angels themselves, who are in the prophetick Visions frequently introduced as prostrating themselves before the Throne of God with this Part of their dutiful Homage, adoring his glorious Perfections, or applauding his marvellous Counsels and Works, *Isa. vi. 1, 2, 3.* *Luke ii. 14.* *Rev. v. 11, 12.* *Rev. vii. 11, 12.* And glorified Saints join in concert with them, *Rev. v. 8, 9, 10 — 13, 14.* *Rev. vii. 9, 10.* *Rev. xix.* from the first to the ninth Verse. What way, indeed, they concur in this delightful Work, is to us wholly unknown; but, no doubt, 'tis in some such way whereby the Flames of Divine Love kindled in the Breast of every glorified Soul are discoverable by others, and there is a mutual Communication of their devout Affections,

and a far more perfect one than can be made by our Verbal Thanksgivings or Vocal Melody. "Methinks (saith the excellent Mr. Baxter) when we are singing or speaking God's Praise in the great Assemblies with joyful and fervent Souls, I have the liveliest Fore-taste of Heaven upon Earth; and I could almost wish that our Voices could reach through all the World, and to Heaven itself. — Nor is there any Exercise in which I had rather end my Life." And if it be so sweet to join in the imperfect Praises of the Church here below, how ravishing will it be to bear our Part in the triumphant Hallelujahs of the heavenly Community! Especially, when our Praises there shall not only be more suitable to the Divine Majesty, of whom our Apprehensions will be more clear, but be offered up with the highest Ardors of flaming Devotion; our Souls and all their spiritual Powers being always perfectly tuned for that heavenly Melody. Methinks could we hear but some Echo of these Divine Songs wherewith the Celestial Temple resounds, it would transport us, and make us long to be there. O! what an Extasy of Delight then shall we feel, when we ourselves shall join our Voices to theirs, and have our Hearts and Tongues enlarged in that angelical Exercise! How justly may we say with the Psalmist, *Blessed are they that dwell in thy House (above) They will be still praising thee, lxxxv. Psalm 4.*

Nor must we imagine this to be all our Business there. No doubt, there are various Works besides in which the heavenly King will employ all that are the happy Attendants on his Throne above. 'Tis mentioned as one Part of the Felicity of Heaven, That there the Servants of God shall serve him, *Rev. xxii. 3.* And doubtless, their Services shall be as much more honourable and delightful, as their Capacity and Zeal to perform them shall be greater. We shall be there like to Angels, and those we know are ministering Spirits, whose Services the Great God makes considerable use of in the Government of the World. And our Lord describes the Reward of him that used his Talents well, by his being made Ruler over ten Cities, *Luke xix. 17.* And what our judging the World, and Angels, *1 Cor. vi. 2, 3.* And our sitting with Christ on his Throne, *Rev. iii. 21.* And having a Kingdom appointed to us, &c. may import of our being entrusted with Authority and Power, and having jointly, with holy Angels, under our blessed Lord, a ministerial Inspection and Rule in some Part of this vast Universe, is too hard for us now to determine. But 'tis in general highly probable, that we, as well as the holy Angels, shall be employed in some beneficent Works to our Fellow-Creatures, that shall be a suitable and delightful Exercise both to our spiritual and bodily Powers, that shall then be raised to the most sprightly Vigour and Activity. But what those in particular are, we must be content to be as yet ignorant; only we need not doubt but our very Work will be Part of our Wage, and our heavenly Service a real Branch of our Eternal Reward.

IV. We may consider another Part of the Future Blessedness of the Righteous, as resulting from the Beauty and Glory of the Place where they shall enjoy it.

For, I think, it past doubt that Heaven denotes the Habitation and Place, and not merely the inward State and Condition of the Blessed. There is such a Thing as the Paradise of God in the third Heaven, or Heaven of Heavens, *2 Cor. xii. 2, 4.* There is a Building not made with Hands, in which our blessed Saviour is gone to prepare Mansions for his Faithful Followers. There is a Jerusalem above, a City whose Builder and Maker is God, and that designed as the general Resort of the heavenly Inhabitants. And if there be such a ravishing Beauty in the accurate Frame of this lower World; if this Earth, which

is but, comparatively, as the Sink of this inferior Creation, be full of the Glory of God, what must we conceive that highest Heaven to be, which is as it were the Court of the Eternal King, the Place of his peculiar Abode, and the Seat of his glorious Empire! Nay, if this starry Firmament, and all those vast Bodies of Light that adorn it are but (as one well expresses it) as the Frontispiece to the highest Heaven, what must we think of that Heaven itself, which is as it were his Royal Palace, and the very Throne of the God of Glory? Well may it be called the Heaven of Heavens, to represent its amazing Amplitude and Splendor, the lively Emblem of his Immensity and Glory, who dwells there, (i. e. there peculiarly manifests himself.) And who would not long to see the Beauty and Glory of God shining with the brightest Rays in that Eternal Sanctuary! Who would not account it the highest Honour to be admitted into the Presence-Chamber, and to stand before the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords!

V. And Lastly, We may consider that Future Blessedness of the Righteous, as partly arising from the very Duration of it.

For, as 'tis an unconceivably blessed, so 'tis an Eternal Life they shall then enter into.

And though the Duration be but a Circumstance of our Future Happiness, yet 'tis so important a one as to be a vast Accession to it; as will appear if we consider, what the Eternity of it includes, viz. that 'tis without Intermission, and without End.

1. 'Tis without Intermission or Decay.

'Tis an Immortal Crown, whose Glory never fades; it is an Incorruptible Inheritance, that suffers no Diminution by the longest Possession of it. 'Tis not like sensual Enjoyments, that are only a present Remedy of our weak and diseased Appetites, and therefore soon cloy them if immoderately used; nay, whose Insufficiency and Emptiness tempts us to seek Satisfaction in the Variety and Novelty of them. No, 'tis a Happiness arising from the Fruition of that blessed God, who is a boundless and ever flowing Spring of all suitable Good, in whose immense Glory there is still fresh Entertainment to our inquisitive and admiring Thoughts, and in whose infinite Fulness there is more than we can ask or think. There is in him what will perpetually draw out our exalted Faculties to their most vigorous and delightful Exercise. So that our Felicity can no more decline than that perpetual Source of it can be exhausted. And that perfect and supreme is always a most full and satisfying Good. Nay, as earthly Pleasures are heightened by the fresh Sense of the contrary Evils, so will glorified Saints always retain that lively Remembrance of their past Miseries and Dangers, that will ever heighten the Joys of their Eternal Salvation. In a Word, there are none of those allaying Ingredients in our heavenly Felicity, that abate and extinguish the Pleasure of our sensitive Enjoyments. Glorified Saints have no Temptation to be weary of their heavenly Work and Joys, from either any defect in the Objects they enjoy, or any weakness in their own perfected Faculties. Their Felicity is in a lower degree like that of its blessed Author, fixed and invariable.

Nay,

2. The Blessedness of the Righteous is without End.

'Tis as permanent and durable as 'tis solid and satisfying. It shall be as lasting as the Truth of that God who has freely promised it, and as the Life of those immortal Spirits that are designed to enjoy it. And this Security of its perpetual Continuance renders the Felicity more valuable, and gives it an additional and most delightful Relish. For without this, the Fore-thoughts or Fears of losing so vast a Happiness would be a considerable Allay to it; and it would dash the heavenly Joys them-

selves with a bitter Tincture to think, that how satisfying soever they are, they must come to an End. How would it fully and depreciate the Glory of that State, if it were like that of this World, only transitory and vanishing! Whereas, on the contrary, the Contemplation of the Eternity of our Future Blessedness does consummate and crown it. O vast and boundless Eternity! How dost thou at once astonish and delight us! To think, that after a duration equal to Millions of Ages, our Felicity is as far from ending as ever, and that a blessed Immortality is yet before us. O! how does this enlarge and multiply the Joys of the Blessed, and add an exceeding and unconceivable weight to the Glory they possess! How does it give it a new Accent to the Hallelujahs of the heavenly Inhabitants, when they can, in a Triumph of holy Security in the Divine Promises, say, *This God is our God for ever and ever!* How is the direct Pleasure that glorified Souls feel in the Fruition of him, as it were redoubled by this sweet and satisfying Reflexion, That he will be their Portion for ever! O blessed State, in which Death shall be swallowed up in Victory, and Mortality be exchanged for perfect Eternal Life! Where we shall be fixed Pillars in the Temple of God, and go out no more, Rev. iii. 12. When being received into the blessed Presence of our glorified Lord, we shall be ever with him! 1 Thess. iv. 12.

And thus I have given some Account of the future Blessedness of the Righteous, I am, indeed, very sensible that this is a very obscure and dark, a scanty and defective Description of it. For I doubt not but that when we come to the actual Sight and Possession of that transcendent Glory, we shall put away our most elevated Conceptions of it as weak and childish Thoughts. But yet, what has been already suggested, though in so broken a manner, concerning it, should be sufficient to recommend it to our highest Esteem, as infinitely worthy of our most attentive Thoughts, and ardent Desires and joyful Hopes, and vigorous unwearied Prosecution.

And accordingly, I shall now come to the particular Improvement of this important Subject.

And,

I. If there be such a State of Eternal Life and Blessedness for the Righteous, let us then often meditate upon it.

For 'tis a Subject every way worthy of our intensest Thoughts, most delightful in it self, most necessary to us, and of admirable influence and use when duly realized to our Minds.

1. 'Tis a Subject most delightful in it self.

It should be so to every Heaven born Soul, and much more to those that look on themselves as the happy Heirs of it.

2. This is a Subject very necessary for us to fix our most serious Thoughts upon.

'Tis not a matter of meer curious, though delightful Speculation that I am urging you to, but a matter of vast importance and absolute necessity. To fall short of this heavenly Felicity, is to be undone and miserable for ever. To lose it, is to lose our precious Souls and their Eternal Hopes: A Loss, that can never be compensated, never be repaired! To see others sit down in the heavenly Kingdom, and our selves thrust out, will force us, to weep and wail, and gnash our Teeth for ever, Luke xiii. 28. And yet I must plainly tell you, That Heaven will never be your joyful Possession hereafter, if it be not now the welcome Entertainment of your Minds. A Heaven which you rarely or never think of, will never be highly valued, and earnestly desired, and diligently fought, and then I must tell you, it will never be attained. How bright and how amiable soever its transcendent Glories are, they will not powerfully attract your Hearts if they be not often in your Eye. So that if it be necessary to attain that Eternal Blessed-

ness, 'tis as necessary to engage our Souls in the deep and frequent Contemplation of it. For a few slight and transient Thoughts of it will but leave a superficial and evanid Impression, easily raz'd out by the continual Allurements of worldly Vanities. Attentive and repeated Consideration must engrave it on our Minds, if ever we would have our Hearts cast into the Mould of it, and become truly heavenly and divine. An habitual Aversion to think of it, is a dangerous sign that we have no Interest in it.

3. This is a Subject of admirable influence and use, when duly realized to our Minds.

Heaven is the great Object of those Divine Hopes that are the chief Spring of all our Religious Endeavours. 'Tis this *incorruptible Prize* in our Eye that makes us enter on the Christian Course and Race; 'tis the prospect of this *Eternal Crown* that powerfully draws us into the *Spiritual Warfare*; 'tis the Forethoughts of this endless Felicity, proposed to us in the Divine Promises, that effectually engages us to *cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the fear of the Lord*; 'tis the lively prospect of the Glories of the unseen World, that gives us so noble and easy a Victory over all the Temptations of this sensible World; 'tis the believing Views of this *heavenly Canaan* that supports us un-

der all the Hardships and Miseries that attend us in our Pilgrimage through this *howling Wilderness*; 'tis the sight of this glorious *Crown* has made so many *Martyrs* triumph over all the Terrors of the *Cross*; 'tis the lively Apprehensions of *Eternal Life* has made them look *Death* in the face, (even when Sufferings made it appear most ghastly and frightful) not only without Fear, but with Confidence and Joy. So glorious and transforming an Efficacy would Heaven have upon our Souls, if we had but by frequent believing Meditations, clear and realizing Views of it. And therefore the inspired Writer to the Hebrews ascribes all the illustrious Acts of those eminent Saints (mentioned in the Eleventh Chapter of that Epistle) to that Divine Faith, *which is the Subsistence of this expected Felicity, and the Evidence of this unseen Glory and Blessedness*, Heb. xi. 1. O let us then familiarize this powerful Object to our Minds, that it may produce the like glorious Effects in our Lives. Let us suffer our Thoughts to fix and dwell upon that State of our future Perfection and Blessedness. To think much of Heaven is the best means to bring much of it down into our own Hearts here, in order to the preparing us for a joyful Ascent unto it, and endless Possession of it.

S E R M O N XXI.

On the Happiness of HEAVEN.

Matth. xxv. 46.

And these shall go away into Everlasting Punishment, but the Righteous into Life Eternal.



HAVE already from these Words not only shewn, *Who* those are of whose happy *Doom* the Text relates the *Execution*; but I have also largely considered that *State of future Blessedness* to which the *Righteous* are *adjudged*, and which is here called *Eternal Life*. I have treated both of the *Negative* and *Positive* part of it. The former includes an entire Exemption from all Evil, whether of *Sin* or *Misery*, *Moral* or *Natural*. The latter (as I shewed) arises, partly from the entire *Perfection* of our Nature (both of our *Souls* and *Bodies*) and from the highest Exercise of our *perfected Powers* on their most noble and agreeable *Objects*, partly from the *Society* and *Converse*, partly from the *Employment* and *Work* of the heavenly State, partly from the *endless Duration* of all this Felicity.

I then came to the Application of this important Subject.

And,

I. If there be such a State of future Blessedness designed for the *Righteous*, let us then often meditate upon it.

'Tis a Subject most delightful in it self; 'tis very necessary for us to fix our intensest Thoughts upon; and 'tis a Subject of admirable influence and use when duly realized to our Minds.

II. As we should often meditate upon the future Blessedness of the *Righteous*, so we should carefully enquire into our *Title* to it.

For if there be such a State of unconceivable Perfection and Joy, Felicity and Glory to be attained, methinks it should put all of us upon anxious Enquiries, whether we are the happy *Heirs* of it? Who, that has any regard to the precious Interests of his own Soul, would not put the Question to himself, What grounded Hope have I of entering into this glorious *Eternal Life*, of which I have often heard so ravishing a Description? Nothing could argue greater Stupidity than to be wholly unconcerned, whether we are like to be admitted to it, or excluded from it. The final Decision of this grand Question, by our impartial Judge, is a matter of infinite moment, and we can never hope it will be comfortably decided then, if it be not now frequently and impartially debated in our own Consciences. And indeed, the right Determination of it at present is of vast importance and use to us. If we are *Heirs of Eternal Life*, why should we not endeavour to know it, that we may reap the unspeakable Comfort of that happy Discovery, and live in the joyful triumphant Hope of it; If we are not, why should we not know it, that we may no longer deceive our selves with pernicious and presumptuous

sumptuous Hopes, that will at last expose us to miserable disappointment? Let us then resolve to bring our State to the Test, and narrowly search our own Hearts and Lives to see, whether those Characters be legible there, by which the Heirs of Eternal Life are described in the precious Promises thereof.

And here the Text suggests to us a general Character of them.

'Tis the Righteous (and they only) that shall go in to Eternal Life.

Not (as I have shewn) those only that have been perfectly sinless and innocent; nor those at all, that have only maintained some specious shew of Equity in their Dealings with Men, while they have made no conscience of their Duty towards God; but those and only those, that have sincerely resolved upon, and endeavoured after, universal Conformity of Heart and Life to the holy Will and Laws of God. Those that have made it their daily and most serious Exercise to keep a Conscience void of Offence, both towards him and towards Men. Not merely those that have refrained all gross Acts of Profaneness and Impiety, Injustice and Fraud, Oppression and Cruelty, Uncleanliness and Intemperance, &c. but those that have made the positive part of Universal Holiness, of Piety and Devotion, of Justice and Charity, of Sobriety and Heavenliness, their serious Study and continued Practice. In a word, Those that have this Character of their being righteous, *That they have walked in all the Commandments and Ordinances of the Lord blameless,* Luke i. 6.

As particularly, the Context intimates to us, that 'tis not sufficient to denominate us Righteous in the Judgment of our blessed Saviour; that we have not grossly injured and wronged others, that we did not oppress and even grind the faces of the Poor, unless we have according to our Abilities extended our beneficent Charity to them. Those only are righteous in his account, who have been merciful as well as just, who according to their Power, have fed the hungry, and clothed the naked, and visited the sick and imprisoned, and treated the indigent distressed Disciples of Christ with the like tender Affection and Pity, and the like real substantial Fruits of their unfeigned Love, as all are ready to pretend they would have done to our blessed Saviour himself, had they seen him in the like Necessity and Misery. And this the rather deserves our particular Remark, because our Lord fixes here upon it as one eminently distinguishing Character of those righteous Ones whom he will adjudge to Eternal Life. The whole of our moral Duty is summarily included in our Love to God and Man.

Our Love to Man does never more evidently appear than in these solid Effects, these costly and self-denying Fruits of it. And where our unfeigned Love is extended to our Fellow Creatures on God's account, (as they bear his natural or moral Image) 'tis the most convincing Proof of our superlative Affection to the blessed God himself. And therefore this particular Branch and Instance of true Righteousness or Holiness must by no means be over-looked by us. For those are expressly ranked among the Wicked by our Lord, not merely who crushed and injured the Poor, but who refused when able, to feed and cloath them, to visit them and minister to their Necessities.

But to this more general Character of the Heirs of Eternal Life, viz. their being Righteous, I shall subjoin two particular ones frequently mentioned in Scripture, and drawn from the Nature of that future Blessedness which we should enquire about our Title to. Let us then farther enquire,

1. Has the grand Interest of Eternal Life the preference above the Interest of this, whenever they come to stand in competition?

Do we seek first the Kingdom of God and the Righteousness thereof? *Matth. vi. 33.* Not only early and in the first place, but with the main vigour and warmth of our Affections and Endeavours. Is Heaven the

Treasure we resolve to purchase at any rate? Are we willing to sell all for that (inestimable) Pearl of Price? *Matth. xiii. 45, 46.* Can we freely part with our present Possessions, when we must either forego them, or the Hope of our heavenly Inheritance? Is Eternal Life the one Thing needful, which we resolve to secure, whatever else be neglected or disregarded? *Luke x. 42.* Is this the better Part, which we make our principal choice, and our highest care to ascertain? When, in the choice of our Calling, our place of Abode, our Condition and State in the World, the Interest of this and of a better Life are so far Competitors, that we cannot take the most effectual means to secure the one without hazarding or prejudicing the other; does the more momentous concern of our Souls and our Eternal Welfare always turn the Scale, and determine our choice? This is a solid Evidence that we are Heirs of Eternal Life, when we thus value and seek it above every Thing else.

Whereas on the contrary, if this Earth be practically preferred before Heaven. If the securing our temporal Prosperity be the Prize we chiefly aim at, and most earnestly contend for, while the attainment of Eternal Life is only a Business on the by, which we put off with a few slight Thoughts and lazy Wishes, and superficial Endeavours. If, with the young Man, *Matth. xix. 22.* we had rather quit our Hopes of a Treasure in Heaven than abandon our great Possessions on Earth; If a regard to our present secular Interest chiefly sway us, even where we cannot consult it without apparent danger and detriment to our Souls; If we are far more eager and intent upon laying up corruptible Treasures here below than incorruptible ones above; If we more violently seek to grasp at temporal Riches than to lay hold on Eternal Life, 'tis a dangerous sign that we are not the Heirs of that future Blessedness that is reserved for the Righteous. For the infinitely wise God will never so prostitute the heavenly Glory as to assign it to those that so wretchedly undervalue it, by postponing it to their worldly Interest. The sordid Votaries of Mammon shall never be the Heirs of the Celestial Paradise; nor shall the transcendent Glories of the World to come be their Portion that suffer the despicable Vanities of this Earth to out-rival them. And, alas! to how many professed Candidates of Eternal Life will this Character discover the Vanity of their Pretensions, if they will impartially examine themselves by it?

2. Do we earnestly breath after the Possession of Eternal Life.

Does our Faith and Hope powerfully attract our Desires towards those unseen but glorious Objects which they have embraced? Do we wait for the blessed Hope? Do we love and long for the glorious appearance of our God and Saviour? *Tit. ii. 14.* Do we, as having the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within our selves, waiting for the Adoption, even the Redemption of our Bodies? *Rom. viii. 23.* Do we groan under the Weight of this mortal Body, and much more under that heavier Load, a Body of Sin, and ardently wish for the Perfection and Glory of a blessed Immortality? Does the prospect thereof raise us above the inordinate love of Life, or fear of Death? Are we (whenever God pleases) heartily willing to be absent from the Body, and present with the Lord? Do we account it in it self far better, and more eligible, to be with Christ, *2 Cor. v. 8, 9.* *Phil. i. 23.* When he gives the joyful intimation of his final appearance, *Behold I come quickly,* do our Hearts echo back with affectionate Zeal and Fervor, *Amen, even so come, Lord Jesus?* *Rev. xxii. 20.* Do we think with the highest Satisfaction and Joy of actually coming to the Mount Sion above, to the innumerable company of Angels, and to the perfected Spirits of the Just; to the blessed God, and to our glorified Mediator? *Heb. xii. 23.* This is a comfortable Evidence, that our Treasure is really laid up in Heaven, when our Hearts are thus fixed there.

But

But on the contrary, if our pretended Hopes of Heaven signify nothing to draw up our Desires thither; If we no otherwise desire it than merely as a Refuge and Retreat from Hell, when we are forced to leave this Earth; but if it were left to our choice, would much rather enjoy an Immortality in the fruition of earthly Comforts than of spiritual and heavenly Joys; If we think of going from this vain World to the Possession of that heavenly Felicity, rather with prevalent Aversion and Reluctancy than with Pleasure and Delight; If we can relish no satisfying Joy in the frequent Thoughts, and realizing Prospect of that blessed State; If the Contemplation of it is wholly unaffecting because 'tis an unwelcome Subject to our Minds, this is a dangerous sign that we are not the *Heirs of Eternal Life*, since our *Affections are not set upon it*, nor aspire to it; That we have no *Treasure in Heaven*, since our *Hearts are so little conversant there*.

According to such scriptural Characters as these, we may judge of our Title to *Eternal Life*. And, O what need have we to use the utmost care that our Hopes of it be not built upon a *sandy Foundation*, but upon solid Evidence, lest they should expose us to the remediless Miseries as well as Shame of a disappointment at last. For it will be dreadful, indeed, to find the *Door of Heaven* for ever shut upon us, when we come with a vain Confidence to knock and cry, *Lord open to us*. It will be dismal to find our selves thrust out into outer Darkness, when we presumptuously claimed an Entrance into the Kingdom of God.

Now, according to the Result of this Enquiry, I shall,

III. Address my self both to those that are not entitled to *Eternal Life*, and to those that are.

First, I would address my self to those that are not entitled to *Eternal Life*.

And to such I would offer something by way of *Reproof*, and something by way of *Exhortation* and *Advice*.

I. By way of *Reproof*. I would beseech such seriously to consider,

Is there such a Thing as *Eternal Life* attainable, how inexcusable then is thy Guilt, that thou hast done nothing as yet to secure thy Title to it? How amazing Stupidity is it, that the free Offers thereof should be so long and so wretchedly despised! What canst thou alledge for thy self, why thou hast so long neglected all serious Endeavours to attain it?

Is it because thou dost not believe the reality and certainty of it?

And what ground canst thou have for thy unaccountable Infidelity? Should not the Hopes of refined Pagans (of *Socrates* and *Plato*, of *Cicero* and *Seneca*, &c.) who have so warmly pleaded for, and so earnestly aspired to a blessed Immortality, reproach and shame thy wretched Unbelief? Shall they profess their Hopes of a State of future Reward and Bliss for the Vertuous and Good, though only founded upon uncertain Conjectures; and wilt thou herd thy self with the *Beasts that perish*, by confining thy Hopes to this dying momentary Life? Dost thou think so excellent a thing as the Soul of Man, made by its wise Creator for no other end, than to animate a clod of organized Dust for a few Days or Years, and then to sink into Eternal Darkness and Silence! Nay, how much more inexcusable is thy Unbelief, to whom the Gospel has brought Life and Immortality to Light? To whom the Son of God has been sent from Heaven, to reveal the Glory and Blessedness reserved for the Righteous there? And what more credible Messenger could have been sent? What fuller Credentials could he have brought? What more satisfying Evidence could thou expect? How justly will those sink into the horrors of *Eternal Death*, who, after such Assurance, will not credit the Promise of *Eternal Life*? (A Promise so worthy of God to make, and so fit for the Faith of Man to embrace!) For

the Infidelity of such as enjoy the Light of Divine Revelation, is wilful and affected, and therefore will but aggravate their Guilt, and heighten their Condemnation?

Or is it because thou didst never yet seriously consider the Offers of *Eternal Life*?

And is not thy wilful Inconsideration yet far more inexcusable? Is the Promise and Offer of *Eternal Life* unworthy of thy serious Thoughts? Nay, has the sovereign Majesty of Heaven thought it a sufficiently important Errand of sending his own Son, that he might so dearly purchase it, so fully reveal, and so freely tender it to thee; and dost thou think the Discovery and Tender of it below thy Notice and Consideration? Has he in his infinite Mercy proposed so transcendent a Glory and Felicity to thy View and Hope, and set it in so bright a Light that it might powerfully attract thy Heart; and wilt thou wilfully close thine Eyes upon it? Has he presented so invaluable a *Pearl of Price* to thy acceptance, and (if I may so speak) made it so cheap a Bargain and Purchase; and wilt thou not so much as enquire into the value of it, whether it be worth thy pains to acquire and gain it? O monstrous Stupidity and Ingratitude! O unconceivable Perverseness and Folly! How justly will these be excluded from *Eternal Life*, who thus put it away from them, by banishing it out of their very Thoughts and Consideration?

Or is it because, upon deliberate Thoughts, thou reckonest that *Eternal Life* is not worth thy pains and diligence to attain?

But how is it possible that a reasonable Soul (designed and framed for Immortality) should be so blind in reference to its own most precious and valuable Interests! Dost thou, indeed, think everlasting Blessedness so contemptible a thing? Are the un fading Glories of the heavenly State such despicable Tribes in thine Eye? What wilt thou think worthy of thy utmost Endeavours and Care, if this be not? Hast thou any Concerns to mind and prosecute, that are of higher, nay, any that are of equal importance and moment as this? Canst thou pretend that the providing for a perishing Life, is an Affair of as great consequence and weight, as the securing of *Life Eternal*? What! is a corruptible clod of Earth of equal worth with an Heaven-born and Immortal Mind? Is there any proportion between a few moments of Time and a boundless Eternity? Is there any comparison between temporal Possessions, of which Death will soon disseise thee, and an incorruptible Inheritance, of which thou canst never be dispossessed? O blush, that ever things so infinitely distant in their worth and value, should ever come into competition! Nay, blush much more, that what is infinitely more valuable, should be slighted and postponed; and what is comparatively but despicable and worthless, should be preferred! Amazing Folly, that a reasonable Soul should so unaccountably undervalue itself, and its own Eternal Concernments! What is this, but to prefer the Cask before the Jewel, or to barter away an inestimable Pearl for painted Glass, nay, with profane Esau, to sell our Celestial Birthright for a morsel of Meat, Heb. xii. 16. A Folly that no Words can sufficiently express, no Thoughts can fully reach, and no Tears can enough lament and deplore.

Or is it because thou intendest some time or other hereafter to think of securing *Eternal Life*, that thou now neglectest it? Thou hast at present other things to mind, and when those are dispatched thou wilt take care of this.

And what (Man!) is this, but to express the most vile Contempt of *Eternal Life*, as if it did not deserve thy most early as well as thy most earnest Care! If it be of infinitely greater moment and value than any thing else, why should it not be first secured? Why should any thing else have the preference, that cannot reasonably pretend to it? Nay, I must

tell thee, That the Kingdom of God should be sought first by all that would take the most sure and effectual course to attain it, *Mattb. vi. 33.* All must be sold for the Pearl of Price. Any other Affairs may be more safely deferred than this. For any thing thou knowest, 'tis but a few Weeks or Days remain in which *Eternal Life* is to be lost or gained for ever. It ought therefore to be thy first Enquiry, *What shall I do to inherit it?* While thou delayest and slumbrest, the midnight Cry may be raised, the Bridegroom may enter, and the door of Heaven be shut upon thee for ever. And little dost thou know how soon, as to Thee, the accepted Time, and the Day of Grace and Salvation may be irrecoverably past and gone.

O lament then over thy woful Folly, that hast so long, so stupidly trifled with the Offers of *Eternal Life*. Nay, blush at thy own Ingratitude, that hast so long disregarded and trampled on the infinite Love of God, manifested in the glorious Proposals of so transcendent a Felicity. Trembling to think that, for contemptible Vanities, thou hast already run so great a hazard of losing it for ever.

And supposing that any Convictions of your past Guilt are fastned upon your own Consciences by this Reproof, I shall address my self to you farther.

II. By way of Exhortation and Advice.

In general, *Resolve upon securing this future Blessedness of the Righteous.*

Often consider the Excellency and Worth of it, and seriously ponder, whether any thing can stand in reasonable competition with it. And if thy Conscience tell thee, That nothing can; O come to a fixed determination with thy self, that thou wilt, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Honour, Glory and Immortality; that the Attainment of *Eternal Life* shall be thy principal Study and Aim, the great Scope and Business of thy Life. Fix upon this as thy one thing absolutely necessary, that must be minded whatever else be forgotten. Resolve to seek first the Kingdom of God, and to take it with a holy violence, *Mattb. vi. 33. Mattb. xi. 12.* Let all other Affairs be postponed to this, and pursued only in subserviency to it.

And that I may assist and guide your Endeavours, I shall add these three particular Advices.

1. Seriously ponder the Nature of that future Blessedness.

For right Notions of it are highly requisite to direct us in our Endeavours after it. Consider it as a State of perfect and sinless Purity, the Happiness whereof results from our clearest Knowledge of God, Conformity to him, Communion with him, and sinless Obedience and Service to him; from intimate Converse with our glorified Redeemer and with those Angels and perfected Spirits, to whom we shall be united in the firmest Bonds of endeared Love, and with whom we shall join in the Eternal Celebration of the Divine Praises. Let such a State of future Blessedness as this be the Object of your Hopes, your Desires, and your vigorous Prosecution. 'Tis the Christian Heaven, and not a sensual Mahometan Paradise that you must aspire unto.

2. Deeply consider the absolute necessity of such a Change in thy Nature, as may connaturalize and frame thy Soul for that blessed State.

If thou wouldst inherit *Eternal Life*, the Principles and Seed of *Spiritual Life*, must, by renewing Grace, be implanted in thy Soul. All those holy Child-like Affections towards God must be formed anew in thy Heart that may incline it to him, and render it capable of relishing the Joys of Communion with him. His Image must be re-impressed on thy Nature; thou must become like to him, holy, just, merciful, true, good and gracious as he is, that a Similitude of Nature and Temper may lay the Foundation of Amity and delightful Intercourse. Thy Heart must be filled with ardent Love to thy blef-

fed Redeemer, and to the whole heavenly Society; and thy Temper and Disposition must bear some Conformity to theirs with whom thou hopest joyfully to converse for ever. Those Exercises of Religion and Piety must be thy most pleasing Employment in the Church here below, that may fit thee for the nobler Services of the heavenly Temple above. And thou must seek for this blessed Immortality by patient continuance in well-doing. Thou must resolve on a course of universal self-denying, persevering Holiness.

O then implore Divine Grace to make this sanctifying Change in thy Nature. Take up with nothing short of it. Dream not of entering into the Kingdom of God without being thus born from above. Hope not for the Glories of the heavenly State without the Foundation thereof being laid in an heavenly Temper and Life.

3. Renounce every thing inconsistent with the design of attaining *Eternal Life*.

Resolutely abjure all sensual Lusts. No such Impurities can enter into the *New Jerusalem*. The Swine of *Epicurus's* Herd were never intended to be the Inhabitants of the heavenly Paradise. There's no Place in those holy and undefiled Regions for such as wallow in the common Pollutions of this degenerate Earth. Adulterers and Fornicators, Drunkards and Revellers, and all other Slaves of their brutish Appetites and Passions, are by peremptory Threats excluded from inheriting the Kingdom of God. All these impure and inordinate Affections must be abandoned and crucify'd, if we would become the successful Candidates of a blessed Immortality. 'Tis the mortified Lazarus, not the voluptuous Sensualists that shall be received into *Abraham's Bosom*, *Luke vi.* from the 19th Verse to the end.

4. Renounce the inordinate Love of this World.

Suffer not this Earth to be a powerful Rival with Heaven. Let not your Affections be divided between two so different Interests which never can be co-ordinate, but the one must always stoop to the other. O then let not this World have the preference in thy Esteem and Love, in thy Choice and Delight, in thy Care and Pursuit. Let not this perishing Life be regarded above *Life Eternal*; nay, let it not be allowed to stand in the least competition with it. Mortify all those sordid earthly Affections that would obstruct thee in the Prosecution of so much more noble and glorious a Prize; and let all the lower Interests of this World appear despicable in thine Eye, when compared with the superior Interest of a blessed Immortality.

And to enforce this Exhortation and Advice, I shall only suggest the two following Motives.

1. Consider, That *Eternal Life* is infinitely worth all thy Industry and Care to attain it.

'Tis an invaluable Price. 'Tis a Pearl of inestimable Price, the Gain whereof would infinitely counter-vail the Loss of the whole World. None ever repented of their earnestness and vigour in the Prosecution of it, or thought it an hard Bargain upon how costly Terms soever they attain it. Martyrs have not thought the greatest Sufferings comparable to this *Eternal Glory*. The prospect of the Crown has reconciled them to the Cross, and the strength of their Divine Faith and Hope has made them triumph even in the midst of the Flames. How much more should the Foresight and Expectation of the same heavenly Reward reconcile us to all the Hardships and Difficulties, to all the Labour and Vigilance of a mortified holy heavenly Conversation! Let us be as steadfast, and unmoveable, and abundant in the work of the Lord as possible, yet we shall find in the issue, That our Labour in him was far from being in vain, *1 Cor. xv. ult.*

2. The Loss of it will appear intolerable, should we miss of it through our stupid Neglect.

Little do careless and unthinking Souls now consider how they themselves will resent that dreadful Loss, when once they are awakened to discern their own Worth and true Interest, and come to see their Loss to be at once unspeakably great and irreparable too. Especially, when they reflect upon the despicable Vanities for which they have bartered away the Hopes of it. O with what Anguish and Rage of an accusing Conscience, will negligent and worldly Sinners behold the *Righteous entering into that Eternal Life*, of which they had once the same Capacity and Offer, but wretchedly slighted it! To see others admitted into the heavenly Nuptials, when the Door of Hope and Mercy is for ever shut upon themselves! To see others *sit down with Abraham and Isaac, and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God, while themselves are thrust out!* How will this fill them with weeping and wailing, and gnashing of Teeth for ever! See Luke xiii. 28. How bitter and cutting will the Reflexion be; all this amazing Glory and Happiness I might once have attained, but for despicable Trifles I have lost it for ever. And now, instead of being admitted a Member of that triumphant Society above, I am doomed to the Converse of Infernal Fiends; and instead of being received into those Mansions of Light and Bliss, I must take up my forlorn Abode in the horrors of Eternal Darkness. And who can

bear such wounding Reproaches from his own Conscience, when it thus represents to him the dismal but remediless Fruits of his past wilful and inexorable Folly. And as ever we would not have this to be our own case, let us resolve immediately to comply with the present Exhortation and Advice. For to some of us, 'tis not improbable but this may be the very last Offer of Eternal Life, which, if we reject, a righteous God will take us at our ungrateful Refusal. The Gate of Eternal Life will not always stand open to those that delay to enter into it. We see Multitudes before our Eyes, by a sudden and surprising Stroke, translated from Time to Eternity, so that this transitory Life is ended and gone before they have so much as entertained any serious Thoughts of preparing for a better. And O how terrible to such must the Thoughts of dying be, who have no well grounded Hopes of a blessed Immortality! How dismal, to enter upon an *Eternal Duration*, for the Happiness whereof we have made no Provision! What would we not then give or do, to be assured of Heaven! O let us see then that we be found among the Number of the truly *Righteous*; let us imitate their *holy Life*, if we would share in the Comfort of their *happy Death*, and with them joyfully enter upon the Possession of *Eternal Life*.

S E R M O N XXII.

On the Happiness of HEAVEN.

Matth. xxv. 46. *Last Clause.*

— But the Righteous into Life Eternal.



HAVE entered on the Practical Improvement of this important Subject.

And,

I. I hence exhorted you to meditate often on this *future Blessedness* of the Righteous, which is here styled *Eternal Life*.

II. I hence urged all of you to an impartial and serious Enquiry about your own Title to it.

And according to the Result of that Enquiry, I proposed,

III. To address my self both to those that, according to the Tenor of the Promises of the Gospel, are not entitled to it, and to those that are.

First, I addressed my self to those that are not entitled to it, according to the Tenor of the Divine Promises.

And to the Consideration of such I offered several Things by way of *Reproof*, by way of *Advice*, enforced with suitable *Motives*.

I now proceed,

Secondly, To address my self to such as, according to the Tenor of the Promises of the Gospel, are entitled to Eternal Life.

And to such I would propose the following Particulars by way of serious *Advice*.

I. Entertain a just Esteem and Veneration for that glorious Gospel that has brought so clear a Discovery, and given you so satisfying Assurance of this Eternal Life, which the Righteous shall be adjudged to.

And I rather insist on this, because of the dangerous Progress that Infidelity has made in the present Age. Many proud and presumptuous Wits that falsely assume to themselves the Title of *Free-Thinkers*, have openly preferred their pretended *Oracles of Reason* to the *living Oracles of God*; and though they do not avowedly deny all *future Rewards and Punishments*, yet would leave us under the same Uncertainty about them, that the Light of Nature (unassisted by supernatural Revelation) has done.

That Man must be sunk into the lowest degree of Stupidity, that knows he must die, and yet is wholly unconcerned and thoughtless what will become of him at Death, *i. e. Whether Death be an utter Extinction of Life?* Or, *There is a Life to come, and a State of future Rewards and Punishments, according to our present Behaviour in this?* 'Tis reasonable to expect, that the Conduct of Mens Lives will be very different, accordingly as they act under the influence of the one or the other of these Principles. If they regard *Death as the utter Extinction of Life*, having no other Life to expect, no future Rewards

to hope for, nor Punishment to fear; we may easily conclude, they will draw that profane Inference from thence, which the Apostle Paul mentions, *Let us eat and Drink, for to morrow we die*, 1 Cor. xv. 32. Those will live like the Beasts that perish, who expect to die as they do. But if they are persuaded, that there is a Life to come, and a State of future Rewards and Punishments, they cannot act suitably to that Persuasion, without such a Conduct as may give them some reasonable Prospect of securing the Former, and escaping the Latter.

Now, if we consult those who had only the Light of Nature for their Guide, we find them miserably bewildered about the Resolution of those most important Questions above-mentioned.

Many of their celebrated Philosophers themselves regarded Death as the utter Extinction of Life, thought the Soul perished with the Body, and was like a Candle put out, in the same condition as before it was lighted; and that there was nothing of future Good or Evil to be then expected.

But others of them that were more considerate, thought the Soul of Man survived the Body, and used the best Arguments they could for asserting the Soul's Immortality, and a State of future Reward for the Vertuous, and of Punishment for the Vicious.

But 'tis very observable, that those who pleaded for the Immortality of human Souls, after the best Reasonings they could use, freely confess their own Uncertainty about it, and founded their Judgment rather on probable Conjectures, than upon full and convincing Evidence. As may appear from the dying Words of such celebrated Men as Socrates, of Cato, recorded by Cicero, not to mention the doubtfulness which Cicero himself expresses, when he treats on that important Subject. So that a Life to come, and a State of future Rewards for the Vertuous, was at best rather a matter of their conjectural and uncertain Hope, than of their firm and settled Persuasion.

And even those of them that entertained some glimmering Hope in general of a future Reward for the Vertuous, had very different, and but dark Apprehensions about the Nature of it.

Many of the Pythagorean Sect espoused his Opinion of the Transmigration of vertuous Souls, either into other human Bodies, or into the Bodies of other Animals, especially such as they accounted harmless and useful Ones. An Opinion which to this day obtains much among the Bramians in the East-Indies, handed down from the ancient Brachmans.

Others of them placed vertuous Souls in what they called, *The Elysian Fields*, but represent their Happiness there in Language more proper to describe the imaginary Paradise of the Impostor Mahomet, than the true Felicity of the Saints in Light. As for such an Happiness, as consisted in the clearest Vision of the Divine Glory, and fullest Transformation into the Divine Likeness, they seemed to have little or no Notion of it. Nor could they well be supposed to entertain such an exalted Notion of it, while their Minds were so deeply tinctured with the Belief of a multiplicity of false and fictitious Gods, and laboured under so gross Ignorance of the Divine Nature, and the glorious Perfections thereof.

Besides, as to one essential Ingredient of our Happiness, the Resurrection of the Bodies, and the Re-union of our Souls to them when transformed into glorious and spiritual Ones, the Heathen Philosophers regarded it as utterly incredible and even impossible.

And I might add, That as to that important Circumstance of the future Happiness of good Men, viz. the endless Duration of it, the Heathen Philosophers, who supposed the Soul to survive the Body, were no way agreed about it, but rather supposed the Duration

of it to be but temporary; and that after a long Enjoyment of it, vertuous Souls either returned to animate other Bodies on this Earth, or ceased their Individuation, and returned, and were refunded into that universal Soul of the World from whence they supposed them first taken. †

And when we seriously consider in what fluctuating Uncertainties and Doubts, and in what miserable Darkness the wisest of the Heathens were involved, in reference to a Truth of the highest moment in practical Religion; we can never sufficiently prize that glorious Gospel of the Son of God, that has brought Life and Immortality to Light to us. This is the grand Promise of it (by way of eminency) even the Promise of Eternal Life, 1 John ii. 25. All other Blessings promised are but preparatory to this, and do at last center in it as the final Consummation of our Happiness. 'Tis this Gospel alone that makes the clearest Discovery of the Nature and Duration of it that we can here attain; and gives us that satisfying Assurance of it that is the greatest Support under the manifold Troubles of Life, and the most powerful Relief and Antidote against the Terrors of Death. The Son of God came down from Heaven to reveal to us the unseen Glories of it. He brought with him the fullest Credentials of his Divine Mission and heavenly Doctrine; he himself rose from the Dead, and entered on a State of glorious Immortality. And his Resurrection and Ascension to Heaven is the great Security and Pledge of ours. And if, after all this convincing Evidence, others will go away from Christ by an evil Heart of unbelief; if sensual and proud Scoffers will dis-believe and deride the Promises of his Coming, let it be our Language to him as it was Peter's, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the Words of Eternal Life, John vi. 68. Let us adhere to this Divine Revelation with the most lively Faith and affectionate Veneration, as the only solid Foundation of our highest Eternal Hopes.

II. Adore the marvellous Grace of God in this Promise of Eternal Life.

The Promise of it upon such gracious and condescending Terms so suited to the weakness of our lapsed State, is it self a most free and unmerited Favour. And if we only regard the intrinsic Excellency and Worth of it, we must look for it as the Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. ult. And though, with respect to the manner and order of bestowing it, 'tis called elsewhere a Recompence of Reward; yet to prevent any vain and self-exalting Thoughts, 'tis called a Reward, not of Debt, but of Grace, Rom. iv. 4. Not a Reward that we can claim from the strict Justice of God by the pretended Merit of any Works of ours. (For the best of them need Mercy to pardon their manifold Defects.) But a Reward that flows from the Divine Bounty and Grace as the great Spring of it, and through the Merits of our Redeemer's sinless Obedience and atoning Sacrifice as the only valuable Consideration, or Price of Redemption. Alas! what is there in our mean and defective Services that bears any Proportion or Equality to this transcendent Reward of Eternal Life? What is there in our light and momentary Sufferings, that they should work for us such a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory? 2 Cor. iv. 17: A Glory which the loftiest Hyperboles we can here use do but faintly express (As the emphatical Words in the Original import, καὶ ὑπερβολὴν εἰς ὑπερβολὴν δίδωμιν χάριν δ' ἔτις ἔτι.) What are our temporary Labours and Conflicts that they should be rewarded with an incorruptible Crown! What are we, who are at best but unprofitable Servants, that we should have the Prospect of reigning with our exalted Lord, and of sitting down on his Throne, as he having overcome, is sat down on his Fa-

† The Reader may see this Subject largely handled in Mr. Taylor's excellent *Prefervative against Deism*, Part II.

ther's Throne! *Rev. iii. 21.* What are we, despicable and defiled Worms, that crawl on this Earth, that we should be made like, (or, equal to) the holy Angels, [*ἁγιοὶ ἄγγελοι*] and inhabit those Regions of Light from whence the fallen Angels were cast down! What are we, once wretched *Prodigals* and *Bankrupts*, that we should be made *Heirs of God*, and *Joint-heirs with Christ*! How may we stand astonished that so unspeakably glorious Things should be prepared by infinite Love for those that must confess themselves to be less than the least of the Mercies of God! *Gen. xxxii. 10.* O with what admiring Thoughts of his boundless Grace should our belief of so transcendent Felicity fill our Minds!

III. Adore the distinguishing Grace of God that prepares you for this blessed State.

You were once involved in the common corrupt Mass of Mankind, before Divine Grace did cast your Souls into a diviner Mould, and made you *Vessels of Mercy*, *aforehand prepared unto Glory*, *Rom. ix. 23.* You were once to be ranked among the *Men of this World*, whose (chosen) *Portion was in this Life*, and who minded earthly Things; the distinguishing Grace of God has now raised you to diviner Expectations, and of his abundant Mercy begotten you to a living Hope through the Resurrection of Jesus Christ from the Dead, to an Inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that never fades away, reserved in Heaven for you, *1 Pet. i. 3, 4.* The Apostle Paul speaking of that glorious State, wherein Mortality shall be swallowed up of Life, immediately adds, *Now he that has wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who has also given us the earnest of his Spirit*, *2 Cor. v. 4, 5.* 'Tis through his exceeding great and precious Promises that we are made partakers of a Divine (or, god-like) Nature, and have escaped the Corruptions that is in the World through Lust, *2 Pet. i. 4.* You therefore have particular reason and obligation to join with the Apostle Paul, in solemn Thanksgivings to your heavenly Father, who has made you meet to be partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Light (or, as the Original may be rendered, meet for a share in the Lot of the Saints in Light, *Col. i. 12.*

IV. Endeavour to keep the Evidences of your Right to Eternal Life clear and unfilled.

You cannot be too solicitous to secure that grand Concern, and put it beyond any rational Doubt. All Uncertainties about it must be very uncomfortable to a serious and considerate Mind. No wilful presumptuous Sins must be indulged, that would blot or darken your Evidences, and render your Title dubious to the view of an awakened and inquisitive Conscience. The inspired Writer to the Hebrews thought it needful to recommend to us a cautious Fear; lest a Promise being left us of entering into Rest, any of us should seem to come short of it, *Heb. iv. 1.* Abound more in the Exercise of all those Christian Graces and Virtues that are the Seeds of Glory, and the genuine and distinguishing Characters of the Heirs of Eternal Life. Attend to the Apostle Peter's Exhortation, of adding one Grace to another, and giving all diligence to make your Calling and Election sure, that so an Entrance may be abundantly ministered to you into the everlasting Kingdom of your Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, *2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7, 10, 11.* 'Tis the diligent and active Christian that is studious to abound in every good Word and Work, that may expect to attain a full assurance of Hope unto the End, *Heb. vi. 10, 11, 12.*

V. Rejoyce in the Hope of Eternal Life.

What can administer solid Delight to our Minds, if the believing Prospect of it will not do it? With what Pleasure may we suppose did Moses on Mount Nebo view the Beauty and Plenty of the promised Land! With greater Pleasure should we view the heavenly Canaan, as represented to us in the Divine Promises, which are the Map and Chart of it. With what satisfaction do the Children of this World look over those Deeds and Writings that convey and make over to them a considerable Estate, as their

earthly Inheritance; and shall not we, the Children of Light, with far greater satisfaction peruse the Divine Promises that contain the free Grant and Gift of an Eternal heavenly Inheritance, which as it is more excellent and more durable, so 'tis such as no human Fraud or Violence can ever dispossess us of? We may observe, That when the Disciples of Christ returned from executing their Commission to the lost Sheep of Israel, highly pleased, that the Devils were subjected to them through his Name, our Saviour directs them to a more proper and serving Object of their Joy, *Notwithstanding in this rejoyce not, that the Spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoyce, that your Names are written in Heaven*, *Luke x. 17, 20.* Account it your highest Honour and Happiness to be enrolled and registered in the Lamb's Book of Life. Let it appear that you take the great Objects of your Faith and Hope (though invisible to sense) for the most glorious and sure Realities; by the satisfying Delight with which you, on all occasions, think and speak of them. The believing Foresight and Expectation of this endless Felicity so sure and near, should allay all your present Sorrows, support you under the manifold Afflictions of this present Life, and arm you against the inordinate Fear of Death. No other Consideration can so effectually do it as this. And the Joy that springs from it is every way able to counterbalance all the Evils we can suffer here. 'Tis a Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory, *1 Pet. i. 8.* 'Tis a Joy that no Man can take from us.

VI. Let us long for the Possession of Eternal Life.

Let it appear, that this Future Blessedness, though unseen, has an attractive Beauty to a believing Eye, by exciting in us most ardent Desires of it. Let us not shame and disgrace our excellent Hopes, by the languor and coldness of our Desires. We may observe in what strong and emphatical Expressions the Apostle Paul represents the genuine Temper of sincere Christians, having by an elegant Figure described the whole Creation, as groaning and travailing in pain together, waiting for the Manifestation of the Sons of God, he adds, *And not only they, but we our selves groan within our selves, waiting for the Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of our Bodies*, *Rom. viii. 22, 23.* To the like Purpose he speaks elsewhere, *For we that are in this Tabernacle do groan, being burdened, not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that Mortality might be swallowed up of Life*, *2 Cor. v. 4.* He represents all true Christians as looking for the blessed Hope, and loving the glorious Appearance of the great God and their Saviour Jesus Christ, *Titus ii. 13.* *2 Tim. iv. 8.* He represents himself as desirous to depart, and be with Christ, which he accounted to be (with respect to his own particular Advantage) far better than to abide in the Flesh, *Phil. i. 23, 24.* And the Apostle John having introduced our blessed Saviour as saying, *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give to every Man according as his Work shall be*, at the 12th Verse; and again, at the 20th Verse, *Surely I come quickly*, he represents this as the echoing Language of every believing Soul, *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus.*

VII. Let us act more suitably to the glorious Hopes of Eternal Life.

Let us (as the Apostle Paul exhorts) having these great and precious Promises, cleanse our selves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and perfect Holiness in the Fear of the Lord, *2 Cor. vii. 1.* Let every Man that has this living Divine Hope purify himself as he is pure, *1 John iii. 3.* As he that hath called us is holy, let us make it our studious Endeavour to be holy in all manner of Conversation, *1 Pet. i. 15.* Let us reckon our selves under the highest Obligation, both of Duty and of Gratitude, to walk worthy of that God who has called us to his Kingdom and Glory, *1 Thess. ii. 12.* Let us aspire to a nearer Resemblance

blance to that blessed Being in all the imitable Perfections of his Nature, in whose immediate Presence and uninterrupted Communion we expect Fulness of Joy and everlasting Pleasures, Psalm xvi. 11. Our likeness to him is necessary to render us capable of enjoying and relishing those Divine Pleasures. Let us grow in our Conformity to that blessed Jesus in Grace and Holiness here, to whom we hope to be conformed in the Glories of his exalted State. Let us tread in the Steps, let us imitate the Faith and Patience, and persevering Piety of those holy Souls that are gone before us to inherit the Promises, into whose blessed Community we hope to be received, and with whom we desire and expect to associate and converse for ever. Let us habituate our selves as far as possible in this State of Distance and Imperfection to the Work and Joys, the Employments and Delights of the heavenly State. Let our Spirit and Behaviour be such as every way becomes the Candidates and Heirs of Eternal Glory. Let our Heart and Conversation be more in Heaven, where our most valued Treasure and Felicity is laid up, (Phil. iii. 20. compared with Matth. vi. 21.) A sensual and worldly Mind, too strongly attached to the low Interests and Enjoyments of this perishing Life, would be most unfuitable to the believing Expectations of a glorious Immortality.

VIII. Let us recommend Eternal Life to others as the noblest Prize and Aim.

If we ourselves have embraced the precious Promise of Eternal Life, and highly value our Interest in it, methinks we should be unwilling to go to Heaven alone, without drawing as many thither as the Influence of our Authority, our Counsels, and our Example can reach. Let us then exhort and animate, and encourage those we familiarly con-

verse with to join with us in this blessed Design of seeking for Glory, Honour, and Immortality, that they may with us obtain Eternal Life. Let us especially make it our studious Endeavour, that our Families may be as so many lesser Seminaries for Heaven. Let us use our most serious and earnest Persuasions with those under our Inspection and Care, to seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, to strive to enter in at the strait gate, and to walk in that narrow way that leads to Eternal Life. We read of Abraham's dwelling in Tabernacles (a fit Emblem of our uncertain and temporary Abode on this Earth) with Isaac and Jacob, as Heirs with him of the same Promise, even that Promise that directed him to look for a City that has Foundations, whose Maker and Builder is God, Heb. xi. 9, 10. They confessed themselves to be but Pilgrims and Strangers, and such as sought for a better, even an heavenly Country, Heb. xi. 13, 14, 15, 16. And on the account of these their glorious Aims and Hopes, we are told, God was not ashamed to be called their God, for that he had prepared for them a City. (A State of durable Happiness, worthy of his own rich Bounty to bestow on those whom he honoured with this special Alliance of being their God.) And, Oh! how comfortable will our Converse with our dear Relatives on Earth be, when we dwell with them as Fellow-Heirs with us of the Grace of Life! 1 Pet. iii. 7. With what inward Peace and Satisfaction shall we leave them behind us, when we have solid Grounds to hope we shall soon meet with them in the Kingdom of God, and that they shall in the great Day of Judgment stand with us among the happy Number of those Righteous Ones at the Right-hand of Christ, whom he will adjudge by his gracious Sentence to the full Possession of Eternal Life!

S E R M O N XXIII.

On the different Degrees of the Future Reward.

1 Cor. 3. 8. The latter Clause.

Now be that planteth and he that watereth are One, And every Man shall receive his own Reward according to his own Labour.



THE Holy Scriptures assure us, That in the Great Day of final Account, the Righteous shall be openly acquitted, and adjudged to inherit Eternal Life as a Reward of Grace; so they give us just Ground to apprehend, That there will be different Degrees of that Future Reward, as well as different Degrees of that Future Punishment, to which the Wicked shall be condemned.

'Tis concerning those different degrees of Future Reward, that I would now offer what has occurred to my Thoughts, in meditating on what the sacred Writings suggest in reference to this Subject.

And I have chosen these remarkable Words of the

Apostle Paul, as the Ground of this Discourse, And every Man shall receive his own Reward according to his own Labour.

He had in the beginning of this Chapter censured the Christians at Corinth, for those Remains of Carnality that discovered themselves, in their Envy, Strife, and Divisions, occasioned by their over-valuing their Teachers, as if they had been Heads of different Parties, instead of being Instruments employed by their common Lord and Saviour, to publish and promote the common Salvation. One said, I am of Paul; Another, I am of Apollos, Ver. 4. This Factious and Dividing Spirit he thus rebukes, Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos,

Apollos, but Ministers by whom ye have believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man? I have planted, Apollos has watered, but God gave the Increase, Ver. 5, 6. And to check this excessive, and partial Veneration for those that were but Instruments and Ministers, he directs them to ascribe the Success of their Labours to God, as the principal efficient Cause. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, nor he that watereth, but God that gives the Increase.

But as to these Instruments, whose Ministry God made Use of to convert them to the Christian Faith, and to build them up in it, he adds, *They were one, i. e. they carried on one and the same Design, or (as he elsewhere speaks, They preached not themselves, but Jesus Christ, the Lord, 2 Cor. xv. 5. (and only Law-giver and Head of his Church.)* They laid the same Foundation of God's Spiritual Building, even Jesus Christ, the Corner-Stone, and built their Converts upon it. He does, indeed, in the following Verses, make some Distinction relating to the Labours of those employed in this Spiritual Building. Some built on the common Foundation, Gold, Silver and Precious Stones (*i. e. the pure and uncorrupted Doctrines and Precepts of the Gospel*) others mixed with them Hay, Wood and Stubble. (Which Words most probably relate to those Judaizing Teachers that joined Christianity with the Rites of the Mosaic Law, which they not only retained themselves, but urged the Observance of them on the Gentile-Christians.) And concerning such unskilful Builders he observes, That in the Great Day of Trial and Judgment, those Works that could abide the Trial should be approved and rewarded. But their other Works (their unwarrantable or corrupt Additions to Christianity) should be burned up, and their Labour in them lost. Yet they themselves (having adhered to the Foundation, and sincerely endeavoured to propagate the essential Truths and Duties of the Gospel, though through their ignorant and misguided Zeal they contended for these unwarrantable Additions) should be saved, yet so as by Fire, *i. e. they should escape (tanquam ex incendio) as Men do out of an House that is on Fire.*

Now, concerning these Ministers of the Gospel, whether employed in planting or watering, whether Master-Builders or Inferior Ones, whether they preached the Gospel in its uncorrupted Simplicity and Purity, or through a mistaken Zeal preached it with a Mixture of some unwarrantable Additions, he here tells us in the Text, *That every Man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour.* He hereby plainly intimates, That as there was a manifest Difference in their Labour, as to the Regularity and the Degree and Measure of it, there would be a suitable Distinction in their Reward, as to the Degree and Measure of it. And as the Reasonableness and Equity of such a Distinction does equally extend to all that are engaged in the Service of Christ, as well as those that are employed in that special Work of the Ministry, we may warrantably draw this general Conclusion from the Words,

That there will be different degrees of that Future Reward that the Righteous shall be adjudged to.

Or, as the Apostle here expresses it in general and comprehensive Terms.

Every Man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour.

Before I enter on the Illustration of this Truth, it will be requisite to premise two Things by way of Caution to prevent Mistakes.

1. That the Reward to which all good Men shall be adjudged will fully answer all the general Descriptions which the Holy Scriptures give of it.

All that are righteous, according to the gracious Tenor of the Gospel-Covenant, shall inherit Eternal

Life. All that have done the Commandments of God in Sincerity, have Right to the Tree of Life, and shall enter through the gates into the City (the heavenly Jerusalem) Rev. xxii. 14. They shall all be with Christ, and reign with him. They shall all see God, even see Face to Face, and know as they are known. They shall receive a Crown of Righteousness laid up for them, though the Crown of some may be more radiant than that of others. They shall all partake of that Fulness of Joy that is in the immediate Presence of God, and drink of those Pleasures that are at his Right-hand for evermore, Psal. xvi. ult. The Reward of every glorified Saint shall fully come up to the genuine Import of these general Expressions concerning it. All the Children of God shall possess an Inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that never fades away, reserved in Heaven for them. And every One shall have a Place allotted to him in those many Mansions of Glory that are in his Father's House, John xiv. 2.

2. None can claim this heavenly Reward as a Reward of Debt; all must look for it as a Reward of Grace.

That Eternal Death which is the Punishment of the Wicked, is indeed the proper Wages of Sin, what the Wicked have truly deserved at the Hands of a Righteous God, as a just Recompence by way of Retribution of their past Disobedience, Heb. xi. 2. But the Apostle Paul changes his Style when he speaks of that Eternal Life, wherewith the Righteous shall be crowned, and calls it, *The Gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. vi. ult.* The Promise of it is an Act of unmerited Favour, The Blessing promised, though it be with respect to the Order and Manner of bestowing it, called a Reward, is yet with respect to the intrinsic Excellency of it a rich and free Donative, which our great Redeemer has purchased for us, and is bestowed upon us by the Father's good Pleasure, in consideration of his sinless Obedience and atoning Sacrifice. It is an Inheritance we are entitled to as we are Joint-Heirs with him, Rom. viii. 17. No Works of ours (which are at the best imperfect and need Mercy to pardon their culpable Defects) bear any Equality or Proportion to it. And though this Crown of Righteousness is said to be given by Christ as our Righteous Judge, 'tis only to be understood of that Righteousness, which imports his acting according to his own declared but gracious and favourable Rule of Judgment, 2 Tim. iv. 8. Our Sufferings in the Cause of Christ are the most difficult, the most self-denying and costly Services we can perform; and yet these, we are told, are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that shall be revealed, Rom. viii. 18. And therefore the Apostle Jude exhorts all Christians to look for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus to Eternal Life, Ver. 21. Mercy to pardon their manifold Omissions and Failures, Mercy to crown their sincere but imperfect Obedience with a Reward so far transcending not only their Deserts, but even their highest Expectations. We must after all our Labour own our selves to be but unprofitable Servants, that must found all our Expectations of so glorious a Reward on his promised Bounty, and regard it as dispensed on the Account of our Redeemer's Merits, not our Own.

Having premised these two Things by way of Caution, I now come to illustrate the Truth of this general Assertion, *That there will be different Degrees of the Future Reward.*

To this Purpose I shall lay before you such pregnant Intimations of this Truth as occur in the sacred Writings. And then shall suggest a few Considerations that may convince us of the Reasonableness of it.

First, I would lay before you such pregnant Intimations of this Truth as occur in the Sacred Writings.

There

There is One remarkable Passage to this Purpose I shall take Notice of in the Old Testament. It is in Daniel v. 2, 3. *And many of them that sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall awake, some to Everlasting Life, and some to Shame and Everlasting Contempt.* The Words plainly point us to that Resurrection of the Dead, that shall usher in the final Judgment. And in the following Words he represents the happy Issue of the Resurrection to those that shall then awake to Everlasting Life. *And they that be wise shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament; and they that turn many to Righteousness, as the Stars for ever and ever,* Ver. 3. He seems here to distinguish between such as were truly religious themselves, wise unto the Salvation of their own Souls; and such as devoted themselves to the special Service of God in fruitful Labours to promote the Conversion and Salvation of others: Concerning the former, he saith, *They shall shine as the Brightness of the Firmament:* Concerning the latter, *They shall shine as the Stars for ever and ever,* with a distinguishing Splendor and Glory in that bright Firmament.

But if we look into the New Testament, we shall meet with much clearer Discoveries of this Truth.

We may observe in our Saviour's Sermon in the Mount, when he gives us the Character of such as he pronounces truly Blessed, he tells us of the Poor of Spirit, *That theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven;* of those that mourn, *That they shall be comforted;* of the Merciful, *That they shall obtain Mercy;* of the Pure in Heart, *That they shall see God.* But when in the Close he comes to pronounce a Blessedness on those that are persecuted for Righteousness-sake, he not only tells us, *That theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven,* but also, *That their Reward in Heaven shall be great.* See Matth. v. 10, 11, 12. In the same Chapter, at Ver. 19. he distinguishes between those that shall be called the Least, and such as shall be called Great in the Kingdom of Heaven. And in the 10th Chapter, at Ver. 41, 42. he more clearly distinguishes between the Degrees of Future Reward, *He that receives a Prophet in the Name of a Prophet, shall receive a Prophet's Reward; and he that receives a Righteous Man in the Name of a Righteous Man, shall receive a Righteous Man's Reward. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little Ones a Cup of cold Water only in the Name of a Disciple, Verily, I say unto you, He shall in no wise lose his Reward.* Our Saviour here plainly intimates some Peculiarity in the Reward of a Prophet, that distinguishes it from the Reward of a Righteous Man, (i. e. one more eminently religious in his more private Station and Sphere) and probably the Reward of such a Righteous Man from the Reward of his sincere Disciples of the lowest Form in his School of Grace. Of which remarkable Distinction there would be no Foundation without the Supposition of different Degrees of the future Glory. And by the Way, we may see how powerful a Motive we have to entertain, assist, and encourage such as are eminently serviceable to the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Men, that such as do so, shall in some measure partake of their gracious and liberal Reward.

Again, we may observe in the Parable that our Saviour delivers concerning a certain Nobleman, that went into a far Country to receive for himself a Kingdom, and return (Expressions that plainly refer to his Ascension to Heaven, and coming thence to the final Judgment) that having delivered to his Servants Ten Pounds to occupy till he come; when he calls them to an Account for the Improvement that each of them had made of the Pound intrusted with him, he saith to him, who by trafficking with his One Pound had gained Ten, *Well, thou good Servant, because thou hast been faithful in a little, have thou Authority over ten Cities.* But to him, who with his One Pound had gained only Five pounds, he said to him, *Be thou Ruler over five*

Cities. See Luke xix. 12, 13, 14, &c. Where we may plainly see, that though both are liberally rewarded, yet there is a manifest difference in the Degree of their Reward in a due proportion to their different Degree of Fidelity and Diligence in the Improvement of what he had committed to their Care and Management. The former is advanced to an higher Station and Dignity in his Kingdom.

And as the Apostles of Christ were peculiarly eminent in their unwearied Labours, under all possible Difficulties and Discouragements, to propagate the Christian Faith through so great a part of the habitable World, and probably all of them sealed the Truth of it with their Blood; so the remarkable Promise of Christ to them, when Peter said to him, *Behold we have forsaken all, and followed thee, what shall we have therefore?* And our Saviour answered, *Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me in the Regeneration, when the Son of Man shall sit in the Throne of his Glory. (And he will most eminently do so when he comes to final Judgment.) Ye shall also sit on twelve Thrones, judging the twelve Tribes of Israel,* Matth. xix. 27, 28. This remarkable Promise, I say, does in all reasonable Construction import some peculiar Honour and Dignity, whatever it be, that they should be advanced to in his heavenly Kingdom, something peculiar and extraordinary in the Degree of their future Reward.

And we may farther observe, That when the Mother of the two Disciples, James and John, presented her Request to our Saviour, to grant that these her two Sons might sit, the One at his right hand, and the Other at his left in his Kingdom; (the two principal Posts of Honour) he does not deny, that there was such peculiar Dignities, but intimates, that he was not to give them, except to such for whom they were prepared by his Father, and in the following words intimates that profound Humility was one of the surest steps to such extraordinary Advancement.

And accordingly the Apostle John, in the close of his Book of Revelations, introduces our Saviour thus encouraging his Disciples, *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give to every Man according as his Work shall be,* Rev. xxii. 12. And we may thence reasonably infer, That as the Works of some are far more abundant and fruitful than those of others, who enjoyed equal Advantages and Helps, so shall their Reward be more abundant too.

And we may observe many Passages in the Apostolical Writings of the same strain and import with these of their Lord and Master. I shall briefly mention a few of them.

I begin with this Passage in my Text; *Every Man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour.* If there was no distinction in the Degree of future Rewards, suited to the difference of the Labours of good Men, and even of those employed in the publick Ministry, as to the regularity of them, and their Zeal and Diligence expressed therein, there would have been no occasion to call every good Man's Reward his Own, by way of peculiarity and distinction, from the Reward of others. And then those that built upon the Foundation nothing but Gold and Silver, and precious Stones, would have no advantage in the Day of Trial above those that mixed Hay and Wood, and Stubble with it, quite contrary to what the Apostle intimates in the following part of the Chapter, concerning those whose Apocryphal Works should be burnt up, and they suffer Loss, (as to the Degree of their Reward) tho' in Mercy to themselves, their Sincerity in the main should be accepted, and themselves be saved, yet so as by Fire, (i. e. not without danger, as those that escape with their Life, though some of their Goods in the House are consumed. But they were not to expect the same Degree of Reward with those whose Work did abide the Trial, and was more fully approved.

And

And the same Apostle, in the same Epistle, describing the *Glory* of our *spiritual* or *celestial Bodies* in the Resurrection-State, compares it to the different *Glory* of the heavenly Luminaries. Among those he tells us, *There is one Glory of the Sun, and another of the Moon, and another of the Stars, for one Star differs from another in Glory.* So also (he adds) is the Resurrection of the Dead, 1 Cor. xv. 41, 42. Even those that shall shine as Stars in the heavenly Orb, may shine with a different Degree of Splendor. All are not Stars of the first or second Magnitude. Some appear with a peculiar and distinguishing Lustre above others. And he concludes his Discourse about the Resurrection-State with this suitable Exhortation, *Therefore, my beloved Brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know, that your Labour in the Lord shall not be in vain,* 1 Cor. xv. 58. But how would it weaken the force of the Apostle's Argument, if the most laborious Christians should reap no greater Reward, than such as, though sincere in the main, were yet more unstable, and comparatively more sluggish and unactive in the Service of their common Lord.

And the same Apostle, in his second Epistle, encouraging his Converts at Corinth to *Patience* and *Fortitude*, under such Sufferings as their Christian Profession might expose them to, uses this Argument, *For our light Affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal Weight of Glory.* But how could Afflictions and Sufferings in the Cause of Christ be said to *work this out*, if those that were never called to suffer for Christ should possess the same *Weight of Glory*, the same *Degree* and *Measure* of it, with those glorious Martyrs and Confessors, when their Faith never underwent the same fiery Trial? See 2 Cor. iv. 17.

And as the same Apostle tells us in the next Chapter, *That we must all stand before the Judgment-Seat of Christ, that every Man may receive the things done in the Body, according to that he hath done, whether Good or Bad,* 2 Cor. v. 10. And elsewhere, *That whatever good any Man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether Bond or Free,* Eph. vi. 8. And again, *Whatsoever a Man soweth that shall he also reap,* Gal. vi. 7. We may observe, That in the Second of the Corinthians, Chap. ix. ver. 6. where he applies this last Maxim to works of Christian Liberality and Charity, He saith, *He that soweth sparingly, shall reap also sparingly; but he which soweth bountifully, shall reap also bountifully.* And from the same Maxim he urges us, *Not to be weary of well-doing, as knowing that in due season, we shall reap, if we faint not,* Gal. vi. 9.

Having thus laid before you such pregnant Intimations as occur in the sacred Writings, concerning the different Degrees of future Reward, I shall in the Second Place subjoin a few Considerations that may serve to illustrate this Truth, by shewing the reasonableness of it, and its congruity to the Wisdom of God in his judicial Proceedings.

1. There is certainly some difference in the Degrees of Excellency and Dignity among the holy Angels themselves.

We read in the holy Scriptures of *Arch-Angels*, as distinguished from *Angels*, and most probably founded on a suitable difference in the Degree of their intellectual Perfections, and the Pre-eminence of their Office and Authority. The *Angels* themselves seem to be distinguished into two Classes of *Seraphim* and *Cherubim*, though it does not appear to us wherein the difference lies. And we may observe, when the Apostle Paul ascribes the Creation of those invisible heavenly Inhabitants to the Son of God, his Expressions plainly suppose some distinction among them, *Whether* (saith he) *they be Thrones, or Dominions, or Principalities, or Powers,* Col. i. 16. These different Titles seem plainly to imply some suitable difference in the Degree of their Excellency and Dignity.

And as the Wisdom of God shines in this Variety and Diversity among those higher intellectual Beings, we have reason to believe, it will shine no less in those glorified Saints that shall be *Vessels of Honour* in their Father's House above. Some being by the same Apostle compared to *Vessels of Gold*, and others to *Vessels of Silver*, 2 Tim. xi. 20. For though every Vessel shall be filled with *Glory*, yet all are not of equal Size and Capacity to receive the same Measure of it. All those Stars that are fixed in the heavenly Firmament, shall brightly shine, though with an admirable difference in the Degree of their Splendor and Glory.

2. That unexceptionable Equity of God that appears in the different Degrees of future Punishment, according to the different Aggravations of Mens present Guilt and Obstinacy therein, will as truly appear in assigning different Degrees of future Reward, according to the different Degrees of Mens Fidelity and Zeal, and Diligence in his Service.

There will be in the great Day of Accounts a most glorious Revelation [*δικαιοσύνη τοῦ Θεοῦ*] of the righteous Judgment of God, Rom. xi. 4. or, of the impartial Equity of his judicial Proceedings. Now we are sure, that in his awarding the Punishment of Sinners, the Condition of some will be more tolerable than that of others. Some will, as more faulty Servants, be beaten with many, others with comparatively fewer Stripes. The Degrees of their Punishment will be in an exact proportion suited to the Measure of their Crimes, to the Degree of Light they have sinned against, to the Mercies they have abused, to the Means of reclaiming them which they have resisted, and to the different Aggravations, their Impenitency in sinning, has been attended with.

Now, though none can claim the future Reward by way of proper Merit, and the lowest Degree of it is what none can ever expect as a Reward of Duty, yet it will highly tend to the Illustration of the judicial Equity of God to suit every Man's own Reward (as to the Degree and Measure of it) to his own Labour. All that have in the main approved themselves to be his obedient Subjects, have not shown an equal Degree of Zeal for his Honour and Diligence, and Alacrity in doing his Will: The Works of some have been comparatively more perfect than those of others; some have made a more considerable Improvement of the same Number of Talents than others, and abounded more in those Fruits of Righteousness, whereby their heavenly Father has been glorified, and their Christian Profession adorned; some have shewn their superlative Love to God by the Conquest of stronger Temptations, and by more remarkable Constancy and Patience under the greatest Sufferings in his Cause; and it will more abundantly manifest the Wisdom and paternal Equity of God, to suit the Reward to the Work, and to advance those to a more eminent Degree of Glory hereafter, that have here been more eminent in Grace and Holiness, and particularly in Humility and Lowliness of Mind.

3. 'Tis highly probable, that Mens eminent Proficiency in Faith and Holiness here does enlarge their Capacity for higher Degrees of the future Glory.

Our present Life is a State of Probation and Trial, and consequently of Preparation for future Rewards. We are trained up in the Kingdom of Grace for the Honours and Preferments of the heavenly Kingdom. 'Tis by a Progress in Sanctification here that we are made meet for our share in the blessed Lot of the Saints in Light. And our greater Proficiency therein may advance and heighten our Capacity, or receptive Disposition, to partake of higher Degrees of Glory. It may fit these Vessels of Honour for higher and nobler Use and Service. As the Servant that, by his Skill and Industry, had improved his One Pound into Ten, was fit to be intrusted with a more extensive Authority, and eminent Station in the Lord's Kingdom, Luke xix. 12, 13. I shall

I shall close what I have offered on this Subject, of the different Degrees of the future Reward, with a Passage of a late devout Writer, in treating on the same Head.

"I have (saith he) often represented it to my own Thoughts under this Comparison. Here is a Race appointed; here are a thousand different Prizes, purchased by some Prince, to be bestowed on the Racers; and the Prince himself gives them Food and Wine, according to what Proportion he pleases, to strengthen and animate them for the Race. Each has a particular Stage appointed for him, some of shorter and some of longer Distance. When every Racer comes to his own Goal, he receives a Prize in exact proportion to his Speed, Diligence, and the length of the Race; and the Grace and Justice of the Prince shine gloriously in such a distribution. Not the foremost of the Racers can pretend to merit the Prize; for the Prizes were all paid for by the Prince himself; and 'twas he appointed the Race, and gave them Spirit and Strength to run: And yet there is a most equitable Proportion observed in the Reward, according to the Labours of the Race. Now this Similitude represents the Matter so agreeably to the Apostle's way of speaking, when he compares the Christian's Life to a Race, 1 Cor. ix. 24, &c. Gal. v. 7. Phil. iii. 4. 2 Tim. iv. 7. Heb. xii. 1. that I think it may be almost called a Scriptural Description of the present Subject.

Before I enter on the Practical Improvement of this Subject concerning the different Degree of future Rewards, it may be needful to take notice of two Objections that may be offered against what I have asserted.

The One is drawn from that noted Parable of our Saviour, *Matth. xx.* (from the first to the end of the sixteenth Verse) in which he represents those Labourers called to work in the Vineyard, though at different Hours, as receiving from the Householder that employed them, every Man a Penny; and brings in those that entered into the Vineyard at the first, the third or sixth Hour, as murmuring at the Householder, for making them that entered not in till the eleventh Hour, equal (in point of Reward) with themselves, who had born the burden and the heat of the Day. From hence they would infer, That there will be no Inequality in the Degree of future Rewards.

Ans. The Objection is founded on a Mistake concerning the Scope of this Parable, which is not designed to represent the distribution of Rewards in the future State; but to vindicate the free and sovereign Grace of God in calling the believing Gentiles to become Fellow-heirs with the believing Jews, and of the same Body, and partakers of his Promise in Christ by the Gospel, (as the Apostle Paul expresses it, *Eph. iii. 6.*) This he represents the Jews as murmuring at, that when their Nation had for so many successive Ages been the peculiar People of God, among whom his pure Worship had obtained, and his Laws been observed; the Gentiles, who had so long been Aliens, from the Common-wealth of Israel, and Strangers to the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope, and without God in the World; that these Sinners of the Gentiles, who came not into the Vineyard till the eleventh Hour, should be made equal Sharers with them in the Privileges and Blessings of the Messiah's Kingdom, this seemed unreasonable to their proud Spirits, and moved their Envy. Of this Pride and Envy, we meet with many Instances in the historical Account which the Acts of the Apostles give us of the Apostles preaching to the Gentiles, and inviting them to partake of the Salvation which the Gospel revealed, and equally tendered to the Gentiles as well as Jews, upon the Terms of Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord

Jesus. And this Dispensation our Saviour in this Parable justly resolves into the Sovereignty of the Grace of God, who might do what he would with that which was his Own, and which none could pretend to by way of proper Merit. And he thus justly rebukes their Envy at it, *Is thine Eye evil, because mine is good?* v. 15. And he concludes the Parable with these remarkable words, *So the last shall be first, and the first shall be last; for many be called, but few chosen,* v. 16. Which Prediction was remarkably accomplished in the Conversion of the believing Gentiles, and the present Rejection of the unbelieving Jews, which was to continue, till the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. (As you may see at large in the eleventh Chapter of this Apostle's Epistle to the Romans, which contains a full Commentary upon this Prediction of our Saviour.)

And this being the plain Intention of the Parable, no Argument can be drawn from it against that Inequality of the Degree of future Rewards, which other Passages of holy Scripture so clearly assert; and I may add, That we are sure, there will be no Envy or Murmuring in Heaven at this Inequality, when every One will be fully convinced that his own Reward is suited to his own Labour.

The other Objection I would take notice of, is this; That this future Reward being the Purchase of Christ for us, and dispensed on the Account of his Merits, not our own, there seems no ground for supposing any Inequality in the Degrees of it.

To this I answer; 'Tis indeed true, that we owe all our Hope of the glorious Reward of Eternal Life to the free Grace of God, and to the Merits of Christ, as the only valuable Consideration on which it is dispensed. And therefore 'tis justly called by this Apostle, *The Gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord,* Rom. vi. 23. But 'tis no just Inference from thence, that there will be no Inequality in the Degrees of the future Glory. Because the Wisdom and judicial Equity of God will be as truly manifested and display'd in the distribution of future Rewards as his unmerited Grace and Mercy. And so much our Saviour himself intimates to us, when he saith, *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Work shall be,* Rev. xx. 12. 'Tis he that will reward the Diligence of him whose One Pound had gained Ten, by making him Ruler over ten Cities; and him whose One Pound had gained only Five, by making him Ruler over five Cities. And this is no Derogation from the infinite Value of his Merits, that where there has been a remarkable Inequality in the Degree of the Zeal and Diligence, which his Disciples have shown in his Work and Service, there should be a suitable Inequality in the Degree of their future Reward. For this (as I have suggested) will greatly illustrate both the Wisdom and the impartial Equity of his judicial Proceedings. And the Prospect of it is no less powerful an Incentive to our Diligence and Delight in his faithful Service.

But this leads me to the only Use I would make of the excellent Truth I have been insisting upon.

If there are different Degrees of that future Reward, to which the Righteous shall be adjudged, If every Man shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour, let us all improve this Consideration as a strong Encouragement and Motive to the utmost Zeal and Diligence in the Service of our blessed Lord.

We must, indeed, take care, that it be the real Work and Service of Christ that we are employ'd in.

For if, through a blind and misguided Zeal, we mistake that for the Work and Service of Christ, which he never commanded, our Work will be burned up in the great Day of Trial, and our Labour therein will be lost. This was the case of those Judaizing Teachers

Teachers, whose mistaken Zeal vented it self in the Observance of the Rites of the Mosaical Law, when their Obligation was cancell'd by the Death of Christ, and in their Endeavours to bring the Gentile Christians under that Yoke of Bondage. And this is the case of all those who, through the like blind Zeal, misplace much of Religion in the Observance of the unwarrantable Traditions of Men, and those unnecessary Injunctions which they call the *Canons or Laws of the Church*, as if those were equally obligatory with the Laws of Christ. This is the case of all such as contend for their own erroneous Opinions, as if they were the real Truths of Christ; or for such *Practices*, under the Notion of *Gospel-Duties*, as he never enjoyn'd. Such do but build *Wood, Hay and Stubble* upon the *Foundation* the Gospel has laid. This Work of theirs will be disapproved and rejected; and their mistaken Zeal in promoting it, will only prove Labour in vain, though their adherence to the Fundamental Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity may be graciously accepted and rewarded, and (as the Apostle expresses it) *themselves be saved, yet so as by Fire*. We had need then take all possible care that our Judgments be rightly inform'd in the great Truths and Duties of Christianity, and that our Work and Labour be such as Christ will approve, and such as will bear the Trial of his unerring Judgment, and be acceptable in his sight.

But as we should take care that it be the real Work and Service of Christ in which we are employ'd; so we should be no less careful that our Fidelity and Diligence be some way suitable to the Excellency of our Work, and the Greatness of our expected Reward.

There are, indeed, such *good Works* as all Christians are capable of performing, and are under indispensable Obligation to attend. Such are all the Duties of *Piety* towards God, *Righteousness* towards Men, and *Sobriety* in the due Government of our Appetites and Passions, and an *heavenly Spirit and Conversation*.

There are *particular Duties* that belong to the particular *Relative Stations*, wherein the Providence of God has placed us, (as *Magistrates or Subjects, Pastors or private Christians, Husbands or Wives, Parents or Children, Masters or Servants, &c.*) There is a great *Diversity* in the *Abilities or Talents* we are furnish'd with, and the *Opportunities and Advantages* we have for doing good; according to which, more or less will be requir'd of us in the great Day of our final Account.

Now, the greater Proficiency we make in Divine Knowledge, and in real Holiness, according to the particular Helps and Means we enjoy; The greater Fidelity and Diligence we show in the discharge of the Duties of our particular Station, as Members of civil or sacred Societies; The more laborious we are in the Improvement of the particular Talents that we have been intrusted with; The more we abound in all the Fruits of Righteousness; The more we excel in all those good Works which we have a Capacity and Opportunity for; The more steadfast we are in resisting strong Temptations; The more we glo-

rify God by the Exercise of our Faith and Patience under the sharpest Trials; The more active we are in our Endeavours to promote the present or eternal Welfare of others; The more useful and exemplary we are in the Stations wherein God has set us; And the more all our other Graces are adorn'd and set off by that amiable One of *Humility and Lowliness of Mind*, the greater will be our future Reward. And, O how powerfully should this Consideration rebuke our Faulty Negligence and Sloth! How strongly should it excite us to a more eminent Progress in Spiritual and Divine Life! To greater Vigour and Activity in doing good, and to greater fruitfulness in every *good Word and Work*! How should it make us *steadfast and unmovable, always abounding in the Work of the Lord*, as knowing that our Labour in the Lord shall not be in vain, 1 Cor. xv. 58. since every One shall receive his own Reward, according to his own Labour.

We are generally ambitious enough to rise in the World, and to attain to secular Honours and Dignities. And the immoderate Emulation on the account of them often occasions Envy and Ill-will in those whose Hopes are disappointed by their Rivals that are preferred before them. But, O that there were more of this truly laudable Ambition to be Great in the Kingdom of God! O that there were more of an holy Emulation to excel in good Works! *negotius natus igitur* Tit. iii. 8. We serve a bountiful Master, who is not unrighteous to forget our Work and Labour of Love, which we shew towards his Name, in that we have ministered to his Saints, and do minister, Heb. vi. 10. And we shall reap as we have sown, either more sparingly, or more bountifully, 2 Cor. viii. 16.

If there be different Degrees of the heavenly Reward, why should we not aspire to higher Degrees of it? Why should we not by greater Speed and Diligence, and Perseverance in the Christian Race, and by pressing forward (with an holy Contention) towards the Mark, aim at some of the nobler Prizes that are prepared for such laborious and successful Racers? Why should we not by adding one Grace to another, and by more eminent fruitfulness in the Service of Christ, endeavour to secure a more abundant Entrance into his heavenly Kingdom, and a brighter Crown of Glory there?

And there is no danger that such different Degrees of the future Reward should raise any Envy among the blessed Inhabitants of Heaven. Men often envy the secular Advancement of their Competitors, because they think those preferred before them who were less deserving than they. But no such Envy will have any Place in Heaven, where the Reward of every One is a Reward of Grace, to which his Works bear no proportion; and where the Equity of the Sentence will carry full Conviction into their Minds, that their Reward is exactly suited to their Work. And instead of murmuring at, they will rather applaud the Wisdom and Equity of their righteous Judge, in giving to every One according as his Work shall be; and will therefore look on this Inequality in the Degrees of the future Reward, not with a grieved, but with a pleased and admiring Eye.

S E R M O N XXIV.

HEAVEN, the Seat of the departed *Spirits* of the *Just*.

Ephes. 3. 14 15.

- 14 *For this Cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.*
 15 *Of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named.*



INCE my Design in the choice of these Words, is only to treat of the Place where the Souls of departed Saints reside, during their State of separation from the Body, there will be no Occasion to take much notice of the Context.

These Words, with the following Verses, contain the Apostle's Prayer on the behalf of his Converts at *Ephesus*.

His Prayer is address'd to the Father, under a two-fold Character, As the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ; and as the Father, of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named.

For the former Character, viz. The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, I shall not consider it any farther than may serve to illustrate the Words I intend to insist upon, viz. Of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named.

Some Expositors, indeed, refer the Words I have last cited to our Lord Jesus Christ, and suppose the whole Family here mention'd to be named of him. For as by the whole Family they understand, both the Church Triumphant, and the Church-Militant; so since our Lord Jesus is constituted the Head of his Church, which is his mystical Body, they therefore judge, That the Apostle intended in these Words to represent the whole Church under the Notion of the Family of Christ. And there is, indeed, in this Interpretation nothing contrary to the Analogy of Faith; and it would equally serve to confirm the Inference I would draw from these Words.

But since the Notion of a Family implies a Number of Persons that derive their Descent and Lineage from one common Father; since our Adoption is most frequently in the New Testament mention'd as the peculiar Act of the Father; (as we may see in the beginning of this Epistle, *Eph. i. 3, 4, 5, &c.* and *1 John iii. 1, 2.* and *Heb. ii. 10.* and several other parallel Passages) since Christ himself is never stiled, The Father of his Church, though he is call'd the Head and Lord of it; since he himself condescends to call his Disciples his Brethren, and is himself stiled, The First born among many Brethren; compare *Heb. ii. 11.* with *Rom. viii. 29.*) since he himself uses this encouraging Language to his Disciples, *I ascend to my Father, and your Father; To my God, and your God,* *John xx. 17.* I think it hence most reasonable to refer the Words to the Father; and to conclude, That

the Apostle intended here to represent him as the Father of whom the whole Family in Heaven and Earth is named.

'Tis true, indeed, the blessed God is by Creation the common Father of all reasonable and intelligent Creatures, whether Angels or Men. Angels are sometimes in Scripture call'd The Sons of God. And he is also stiled, The God of the Spirits of all Flesh; and, The Father of Spirits, as contradictinguish'd from the Fathers of our Flesh, *Heb. xii. 9.* And therefore this Apostle elsewhere cites with approbation that Passage in an Heathen Poet, wherein he represents all Mankind as the Off-spring of God, *Acts xvii. 28.*

But this is not the Family here intended by the Apostle.

He considers the blessed God in the foregoing Words, as the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. And therefore the whole Family he speaks of, must in all reason be understood of such as stand in a Relation to Christ as their Head and Lord; of such as through him have received the Adoption of Children, *Gal. iv. 4, 5, 6, &c.* of such as by virtue of their Union to him as his living Members, and their participation of his regenerating Spirit, are admitted into the Line of Heaven, and are not only dignify'd with the honourable Title, but also invested in the glorious Rights and Privileges of the Sons of God. And therefore the Apostle John tells us, That to as many as received him, he gave the Power (or Right and Privilege) to become the Sons of God, even to them that believed on his Name, *John i. 12.*

This Family consists of such as are born of God, and made partakers of a Divine (or godlike) Nature. It consists of such as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ has chosen in him, and predestinated them to the Adoption of Children by Jesus Christ unto himself, according to the good-pleasure of his Will, to the praise of the glory of his Grace, wherewith he has made us accepted in the beloved (or favoured us in his beloved Son *ἐν ἀγαπῶνι*) *Eph. i. 3, 4, 5.* And if we compare these Words with the Text, they seem clearly to point out to us this whole Family of God which the Apostle intends. 'Tis the Family of God's adopted Children by Jesus Christ.

And here this blessed Family is distributed into two distinct Classes, according to the different State they are in, and especially the different Places of their present Abode. One part of that Family have their Residence in Heaven, viz. The Spirits of the just Men

Men made perfect, Heb. vii. 23. [*ἡρώδης δὲ αὐτῶν τὴν ψυχὴν ἔλαβεν*] (or, *The Spirits of them that have successfully finished their Course on Earth.*) These have ended their Warfare and are come off Conquerors, and are now entered into a State of Rest and Triumph, of Joy and Felicity, in the Mansions prepared for them in their Father's House, John xiv. 2. The other part of this Family have their present Abode on this Earth, are still continued in this State of Warfare and Trial, where they are train'd up in this Kingdom of Grace for the Work and Joys of the heavenly State; they are travelling through this Wilderness, towards the celestial Canaan; and are but Heirs and Expectants of that Eternal Inheritance which the former are entered on the actual Possession of, Heb. vi. 12.

A late learned Commentator, indeed, in favour of an Opinion entertained by many ancient Christian Writers, would confine this Family in Heaven, of which the Apostle here speaks, to the holy Angels. "These (he tells us) the Jews us'd to call the Family of God above, as they call'd that part of Man-kind on this Earth, whom God had brought into a Covenant-Relation to himself, his Family here below." So that this whole Family, of which God is here represented as the common Father consists) according to his Interpretation) of no other Members than the Angels in Heaven, and the Saints on Earth.

But what then shall we think concerning those deceased Saints, who are represented elsewhere as now inheriting the Divine Promises, and whose Followers we are from that Consideration exhorted to be? (See the foremention'd Heb. vi. 12.) What shall we say concerning the Spirits of just Men made perfect, to whom we are come? (in Faith and Hope, and special Relation) Heb. xii. 23. Are these no part of the Family of God? Has Death cut off their filial Relation to their heavenly Father? Are they no longer to be numbered among his Children? Or, have they no Place of Residence assign'd them? Did not the blessed God stile himself, *The God of Abraham, of Isaac, and Jacob*, long after their decease? And has not our Saviour told us, *That God is not the God of the Dead, but of the Living*? Matth. xxii. 32. Do not those now live, whose God, whose Father, whose kind Benefactor, and exceeding great Reward and Portion he owns himself to be? Where then do these dislodged Spirits of just Men made perfect live? Not on this Earth, which was only the Place of their Sojourning and Pilgrimage, while they were seeking for a better, even an heavenly Country. And since then there are only two Places of Abode assign'd for the whole Family of God, viz. either Heaven or Earth, must we not allow the former to be the Place of their present Residence, if we allow them to belong to his Family at all? If they are assign'd any Place of their present Abode, distinct from Heaven or Earth, is it not manifest that the Apostle has here given us but a maimed and defective Account of God's whole Family? And that he has over-look'd and forgot the most considerable Part of it, that neither have their Residence in Heaven, nor on Earth?

I will only here add, that as it is most probable, that the Apostle speaks here only of that whole Family of God, that is made up of such as are his Children by gracious Adoption, and this on the account of their Union and Relation to Christ, as the living Members of his mystical Body; so he seems in this Passage to have no direct reference to the holy Angels at all. For though they may be stiled *The Sons of God*, as at first created by him, and still persisting in their primitive Innocence; yet they are not, as we, the adopted Sons of God by Jesus Christ. And if the holy Angels make up no Part of the whole Family, which the Apostle is here speaking of; and if the Spirits of deceased Saints are not in Heaven, as the present Place of their Residence, God has at present no part of this Family of his adopted Children in Heaven at all. And there would be no Foundation for the Apostles distri-

buting God's Family into these two Classes, with respect to the different Places of their Abode.

From this Passage of the Apostle, as the sense of it has been clear'd and vindicated, we may, I think, justly infer, That Heaven is the Receptacle or Place of Abode for the Souls of deceased Saints immediately upon their separation from the Body.

And to confirm the Exposition I have given of this Passage, and this Inference drawn from it, I shall,

First, Alledge some other parallel Passages that assert the same Truth. And,

Secondly, Take notice of the principal Objections that are rais'd against it.

First, I shall alledge some other parallel Passages of holy Scripture that assert the same Truth, viz. that the Souls of deceased Saints are immediately translated to Heaven, as their Place of Abode.

This same Apostle speaking elsewhere concerning all true Christians, saith, *We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the Body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by Faith, not by Sight.)*

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the Body, and present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6, 7, 8. The Words in the Original are more emphatical than those of our Translation. We may, I think, thus justly paraphrase them; "We are confident knowing that while we are in this earthly Body, as our present Home and Habitation, we are like Men that are in a foreign Land, absent from that blessed Lord, to be with whom, we account our most desirable Home and Habitation. We are, I say, confident, and willing rather to quit our present Abode in this earthly Body, which we regard not as our proper Home, and to be at Home with Christ, in that heavenly Country, which we regard as the designed Place of our more lasting and perpetual Abode."

Now, if our Lord Jesus Christ be received up into the highest Heaven, or (as the Apostle Paul expresses it) *has ascended up far above all Heavens; (i. e. the airy and starry Heavens.)* If he there continually appears for us in the Presence of God, Heb. ix. 24. If he will continue there till the Time of the Restitution (or, Consummation) of all Things, Acts iii. 21. If, when absent from the Body, we shall be present, or at Home with him in our proper Dwelling-Place, the Souls of deceased Saints must be received into that Heaven where he is.

And 'tis but a sorry Evasion which those make use of to elude the force of this Passage, who deny the Souls of deceased Saints to be received into Heaven till after the Resurrection, and assign some third Place for their Abode till then, viz. that they may in this third Place, though distant from that Heaven where he resides, have some kind of Converse with him in a transient Vision (*visionem quandam*, as they express it.) For this no way answers the genuine import and force of those emphatical Expressions, of being present with the Lord, when absent from the Body, or, being at Home with him, when Abroad, or dislodged from the Body. This third Place, which they would assign them, is not Christ's Home, or Place of Residence, with respect to his human Nature; and they are no more properly at Home with him, while detain'd there, than when they dwelt in these earthly Bodies. The Prophets, while they lived here, had some Converse with God by way of Vision. St. John had a Vision of Christ, and of the New Jerusalem; St. Paul was actually caught up into the third Heaven. But this did not imply their being at Home with Christ, and Heaven, being their Dwelling-Place.

And the same Apostle Paul, in another Epistle, after he had told us, *That to him to live was Christ, and to die was Gain*, adds, *I am in a strait between*

two, having a Desire to depart, and be with Christ, which is far better, (or, by much rather better 1 Phil. xxi. 23. He here plainly supposes, that upon his Departure from this Earth, he should immediately be [*ἐν Χριστῷ*] with Christ. An Expression that plainly implies his enjoying his immediate Presence and Converse; and too strong to be put off with so jejune a Sense, as his having only now and then some transient View of him, while as truly at a distance from that Heaven where he now resides, as when he *abode in the Flesh*. Christ had appear'd to him by way of Vision while here on Earth, but he did not therefore reckon himself to have been present, or at Home with him. This was a Privilege that he then only expected to enjoy, when he should depart hence, and be absent from his mortal Body.

We read of two eminent Saints that lived before the coming of Christ in the Flesh, that they were exempted from the ordinary way of Natural Death. Of Enoch, That he was translated that he should not see Death, because God had translated him, Heb. xi. 5. Of Elijah we read, That he went up in a Whirlwind into Heaven, 2 Kings ii. 11. Doubtless, Enoch was translated into the same Heaven, whither Elijah was carried up. But though we have no reason to expect this extraordinary Exemption from Natural Death, yet we may expect that our departing Souls will be received into the same Heaven into which they were translated.

I now proceed,

Secondly, To take notice of some of the principal Objections raised against this Truth.

It must be own'd, indeed, That many ancient Writers of Christianity were of Opinion, that the Souls of departed Saints would not be translated to what we properly call Heaven (i. e. the third Heaven, as the Apostle Paul styles it, or the Angelical Heaven, into which Christ entered at his Ascension) till reunited to their Bodies at the general Resurrection, and till the final Judgment be passed. They did not, indeed, dream of any such Place as the Popish Purgatory, where any of them were exposed to grievous Sufferings and Torments, in order to satisfy the Justice of God for the temporal part of the Punishment due to their Sins, from which they needed to be releas'd by the Suffrages of the Faithful, or by Masses and Indulgences, as the Romish Doctors would persuade their deluded Profelytes. On the contrary, they supposed the Souls of all the Faithful, deceased, to enjoy Happiness and Rest, in a Place of Refreshment and Joy, waiting for the general Resurrection and final Judgment; and that they would then enter into the highest Heavens. This Place of Refreshment and Rest, distinct from Heaven, (and as they speak, *Extra cælum beatorum*) they called Abraham's Bosom, and Paradise. Those Expressions they understood concerning some Receptacle for the dislodged Spirits of good Men, that was entirely different and distant from the third Heaven, into which they reckoned none could enter till their Bodies were raised, and they adjudged thereto by the final Sentence of Christ. In favour of this Opinion, a late learned Commentator (mention'd before) cites the Judgment of Justin Martyr, of Irenæus, of Tertullian, of Novatian, of Caius, and of Lactantius, and seems to espouse it. Though the learned Monsieur Daille, who has collected their Testimonies to this purpose, does not approve their Opinion, but produces several Testimonies from other ancient Writers (such as Albenagoras, Cyprian, Origen, Methodius, Gregorius, Nazianzenus, Chrysostomus, Hieronimus, Prosper, Genadius, &c.) that assert Heaven it self to be the Receptacle, or Place of Abode, for holy Souls departed; and he justly, from both these different Opinions, refutes the gross Fagment of a Popish Purgatory, as an entire Stranger to primitive Antiquity.

To cite at large the Testimonies of the ancient Christian Writers, in favour of either of these Opinions, concerning the Place of Abode for pious Souls departed hence, would be only to lead the Reader needlessly into a Wood of Antiquity. (Those that would know their different Sentiments may consult the foremention'd learned Daille, in his excellent Treatise, *De Panis & Satisfactionibus humanis*, Lib. V. & VI.) But as their Opinions on either side are in no way decisive and binding to us; so 'tis our business to enquire, whether of them is most conformable to the holy Scriptures, the only unerring Rule of our Faith, as well as Practice. I have laid before you the Evidence that offers from the Scriptures on one side of the Question, and shall now consider, what is offer'd on the other.

The chief Argument, which I find insisted on, is drawn from those numerous Passages of the New-Testament, that speak of the Reward of Christ's faithful Servants, as dispens'd at his final glorious Appearance to judge the World. And because that Reward is said to be in Heaven, Matth. v. 12. they would thence infer, That they shall not enter into Heaven it self till after the final Judgment.

That this Inference is no way conclusive, will, I hope, fully appear on the following Considerations.

1. Those with whom our present Debate lies, freely own, That the Souls of deceased Saints do, during that Interval between their Death and the final Resurrection, enjoy a State of Rest and Tranquillity, of Refreshment and Consolation.

Now we may justly ask them, Is this no Part of their future Reward? Is this no Recompence of their past Labours and Sufferings? If it be (as they must certainly acknowledge, unless they suppos'd the Souls of deceased Saints, during that Interval between their Death and the final Judgment, to be in an insensible State, which is contrary to their own Account of it) what Reason can they assign why such holy Souls may not enjoy that Part of their begun Reward in Heaven itself? If, indeed, they could clearly shew us any Place distinct from Heaven which is allotted for them to enjoy this initial Happiness in, this would end the Debate. If not, then those Passages of Scripture that speak of the Reward of the Righteous being dispens'd at the Resurrection and final Judgment, must only be understood of their complete and consummate Reward; not of that begun Reward they receive in their State of Separation from the Body. And if Heaven be the only Place where their Reward is to be enjoy'd, either their present State of Refreshment and Felicity is no Part of their Reward, or they must be received into Heaven, in order to their inheriting it.

2. Let it be farther consider'd, that we freely grant, That the consummate Reward of deceased Saints is reserved to the Time of the general Resurrection and the final Judgment. For 'tis then only, that their Souls will be reunited to their glorify'd Bodies, and Death be entirely swallow'd up of Life, by their entire Nature being advanc'd to a State of blessed Immortality. But this neither proves, That their separate Souls shall enjoy no Reward of Happiness at all till the Day of Judgment, nor that Heaven itself is not the Place where they shall enjoy it.

And whereas, it is alledg'd against this, "That the Body, compar'd with the Soul, is the vilest and least considerable Part of Man; and therefore the Reward of Glory, reserv'd for the Time of Resurrection, cannot regard the Body only." 'Tis easily reply'd, That the Assertion here contended for, does not suppose that consummate Reward of Glory, reserv'd for the Time of the Resurrection, to regard the Body only. For besides that, the

Wisdom

Wisdom of God has probably implanted in human Souls a natural Inclination to the Body; we may reasonably conceive, That the Re-union of the Soul to a glorified, active, incorruptible, and immortal Body, will make a considerable Addition to the Happiness of the Soul itself, and put it into a Capacity of enjoying many noble and pleasing Sensations, which an unembodied Spirit is incapable of. Otherwise there would seem to be no Reason of the Body's being rais'd at all, if the blessed Change that shall then be made in it, did not enlarge and heighten the Satisfaction, and minister to the Delight and Felicity of the Soul, when re-united to it.

Besides, as Things are in the Language of Scripture often said to be when they are openly manifested and declar'd; so the Reward of God's Children may be represented as dispens'd at the Day of Judgment, because they will then be adjudg'd to it by the publick Sentence of their blessed Saviour, in the Presence of that vast Assembly of Angels and Men that shall stand before his Judgment-seat. And it will then be such a Reward as shall extend to their entire human Nature, and to both the constituent Parts of it. But this no Way argues, that the Souls of departed Saints shall partake of no Happiness, as their begun Reward, between the Time of their Death and that of the general Resurrection, nor that Heaven it self shall not in that Interval be the Place of their happy Abode and Residence.

But 'tis farther pretended, That in the Gospel, there is a Place distinct from Heaven, mentioned as the Receptacle and Habitation of the Souls of the Faithful, during their State of Separation from the Body, which is called *Abraham's Bosom*, into which the Soul of *Lazarus* was convey'd, *Luke xvi. 22.* And 'tis call'd by the Apostle *Paul*, *Paradise*; for since he makes mention of his being caught up into *Paradise*, as a distinct Thing from his being caught up into the *third Heaven*, they would hence infer, that *Paradise* must be a different Place from the *third Heaven*: And this they take it for granted must be the Place of Abode for holy Souls in their State of Separation. See 2 *Cor. xii. 2, 3, 4, &c.*

Ans. As for the Phrase of *Abraham's Bosom*, whether the Soul of *Lazarus* is said to be conveyed by a Guard of Angels, I see no manner of Reason for taking that for any other Place than Heaven itself. We may observe, That our Saviour himself tells the Unbelieving *Jews*, That many should come from the East and West, and sit down with *Abraham* and *Isaac*, and *Jacob*, in the Kingdom of Heaven, while they the Children of the Kingdom should be cast into outer Darkness, *Matth. viii. 12.* Does not our Saviour here plainly suppose the Souls of those Pious Patriarchs to be now in the Kingdom of Heaven? Even that Kingdom of Heaven, out of which the Unbelieving *Jews* should be shut out, when cast into outer Darkness. And therefore when the Soul of *Lazarus* is said to be carried by Angels into *Abraham's Bosom*, we cannot suppose it convey'd to any other Place than that where *Abraham* was, even that Kingdom of Heaven, where he was now a blessed Inhabitant.

For that other Passage, wherein the Apostle *Paul* mentions his being caught up into the *third Heaven*, (or the Angelical, as distinguished from the airy and starry Heaven) and again mentions as a distinct Part of his Vision, that he was caught up into *Paradise*; the Argument seems more plausible for making the *third Heaven* and *Paradise* two different Places. But, I think, the Force of it, in Favour of the Opinion I am now opposing, will be taken away, upon this one Reasonable Supposition.

I shall not contest *Paradise's* being the designed Receptacle or Place of Abode for the Souls of good Men after Death. Our Saviour himself tells the Penitent Thief, upon the noble Profession he made of his Faith in him, *This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise, Luke xxiii. 43.* Nor shall I deny, that the Apostle *Paul* makes some Distinction between the *third Heaven* and *Paradise* in the Place fore-cited.

But those Words of our Saviour elsewhere may help to clear this Matter. In my Father's House (saith he to his Disciples) are many Mansions, I go to prepare a Place for you. By his Father's House, we may reasonably understand the *third Heaven*. By the Place he would go to prepare for his Disciples, we may understand One of those many Mansions particularly allotted for their Abode and Residence. And this particular Mansion is probably call'd *Paradise*, in Allusion to that Garden of Eden, wherein Man was at first placed, and from whence he was upon his Defection expell'd. And if this reasonable Supposition be allow'd, 'tis a sufficient Ground for the Apostle's mentioning his being caught up into *Paradise*, as a distinct Part of his Vision, from his being caught up into the *third Heaven*, which comprehends all those many Mansions our Saviour speaks of in his Father's House. But then, upon this Supposition, *Paradise* is no otherwise distinguish'd from the *third Heaven*, than a Part is from the Whole, or one beautiful Apartment in a spacious Palace is distinguish'd from the entire Building; or one particular Province from a large Kingdom, to which it belongs.

Upon the whole, I can see no sufficient Evidence for assigning any *third Place*, different from both Earth and Heaven, for the Residence of the Spirits of just Men made perfect, during that long Interval between their Death and the final Resurrection. I am sure, 'tis much more comfortable and satisfying to believe that our departing Souls shall be receiv'd up into Heaven, and be at Home with Christ there, enjoying his blissful Presence and Communion during their absence from these earthly Bodies. And though we may charitably bear with the different Sentiments of those ancient and modern Writers, while they own such holy Souls departed to be in a State of Rest and Refreshment; yet I am satisfied, that the Arguments drawn from Scripture for what we believe in reference to this Article, are much more clear and convincing; and the Objections against it are of no great weight and solidity. Let every serious Reader impartially compare the One with the Other.

I shall now close this Discourse with these three Reflections upon it.

I. If Heaven and Earth are the only two Places assign'd for the different Abode of the Whole Family of God, we may thence justly infer, That the Doctrine of a Popish Purgatory is a groundless Fable.

As this Whole Family of God has been generally understood of his Church; so ancient as well as modern Writers, have been wont to distribute it into those two different Classes, The Church-Militant on Earth, and The Church-Triumphant above. The Members of the Latter they are wont to stile *Comprehensors* (or, to speak in the Language of the inspired Writer to the Hebrews, Such as now inherit the Promises.) The Members of the Former they call'd *Viatres*, or Travellers, such as were yet Pilgrims on Earth, but going on in their Way towards the heavenly Jerusalem. But the Doctors of the Romish Church, to support their profitable Figment of Purgatory, have devis'd a new distribution of the Church into three Classes, drawn from their pretended three different States and Places of Abode, viz. The Church-Triumphant in Heaven, the Church-Militant on Earth, and the Suffering-

ering-Church, to which they have assign'd a Place call'd Purgatory (in the Confines of the Place of the Damned) as their present Lot, where they are to abide till they have made full Satisfaction to Divine Justice for the temporal part of the Punishment due to their Sins, unless they are sooner releas'd by the help of *Masses* and *Indulgences*, and what they call the *Suffrages of the Faithful*. And 'tis, indeed, for promoting the gainful sale of these, that this Doctrine is contriv'd, and so stiffly contended for. It would carry me beyond the Bounds of this Discourse, to shew at large the manifold Absurdities of this Doctrine, and its being not only destitute of any Warrant from the holy Scriptures, but also contrary to the manifold plain Declarations of it, concerning the happy State of all good Men after Death. But I need go no farther than this Text for the clear Refutation of it. If these Souls, which they suppose to be detain'd in this Prison of Purgatory, belong to the Family and Church of God, then it will evidently follow, that the Apostle has here given us but a maimed and defective Description of it. He is representing to us the whole Family of which God is the common Father, and the exalted Jesus the common Head and Lord. And he assigns no other different Places of their Abode but Heaven or Earth. How comes he then to forget these poor Members, of what they call the *Suffering Church*, on the Confines of Hell? How comes he in effect to exclude them from God's Family, by confining the Whole of it to Heaven or Earth, as the only Places of their present different Abode? There is no other good Reason to be assign'd for it, but that he knew of no such Place as this Purgatory, nor of any part of God's Family enduring miserable Torments there. The Romish Priests, indeed, are often calling on their Profelytes to remember these suffering Souls in Purgatory, and to contribute something towards their Release. But this Apostle seems to have either over-look'd or forgot these miserable Objects of Christian Charity and Compassion, or at least to have been utterly unacquainted with their unhappy Case. He does, indeed, exhort us to remember those that are in Bonds as bound with them, and those that are in Adversity, as being our selves in the Body, but never reminds us of the distressed Condition of those that lie bound in this imaginary Purgatory-Prison.

II. It concerns all of us to enquire, whether we are Members of this Family of God on Earth, for whom Heaven is design'd for their Abode and Habitation.

The holy Scriptures have furnish'd us with manifold Characters whereby the Children of God are distinguish'd from the World that lies in Wickedness. They are describ'd as born of God, and born from above, John iii. 3, 6. They are made partakers of a Divine Nature, and have escaped the Corruption that is in the World through Lust, 2 Pet. i. 4. They are led (or acted, and guided) by the Spirit of God, whose excellent Fruits are opposite to the Works of the Flesh, (Rom. viii. 14. compar'd with Gal. v. 19, 20, 21, 22, 23.) In this (saith the Apostle John, 1 John iii. 10.) the Children of God are manifest, and the Children of the Devil; whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God, neither he that loveth not his Brother. If we are his Children, our Souls are possess'd and acted by an humble Reverence of him, and superlative Love to him, and a filial Affiance and Hope in his Mercy. We yield a cheerful Obedience to his Commanding, and a child-like Subjection to his disposing Will. If we are his Children, we make it our studious endeavour to be Followers (or, Imitators *μυμηταί*) of him, in all those his communicable Excellencies wherein we are capable of bearing some Resemblance to him.

(Such as his Justice and Equity; his Truth and Integrity, his Faithfulness and Constancy, his diffusive Benevolence and Goodness, his Patience and Forbearance, his Compassion and Mercy to the Afflicted and Miserable, his slowness to Anger, and readiness to forgive, his Acts of Kindness and Benignity to the Evil and Unthankful, in order to his overcoming their Evil with his Good; and in (what virtually includes all) his universal Holiness; his hatred of all moral Evil, and love of Righteousness. And there is, indeed, no surer Evidence of our being the Children of God, than our thus aspiring to be like him, and making his imitable Perfections the glorious Pattern to which we sincerely endeavour to conform our selves.

And if these genuine distinguishing Characters of the Children of God belong to us; if these bright Lineaments of the Divine Image appear in our prevalent Temper, and the general course of our Actions, we may comfortably conclude, That we are a part of his Household and Family, and are adopted into the Line of Heaven.

And if we duly understand the real Value and Advantage of such a Relation, we shall esteem it as an higher Dignity and Privilege, than to be ally'd to the most ancient and noble Family here on Earth, or to have the Blood of the greatest Princes running in our Veins. Our Natural Birth (of how illustrious Ancestors soever we may spring) can convey no intrinsic Worth and Excellency to us above others, and can entitle us to no more than temporal Possessions and Honours. But our being born of God, implies our participation of god-like Qualities and heavenly Dispositions, and our being entitled to an incorruptible Inheritance, and a Crown of Glory that shall never fade away. To be a Son of God, is to be an Heir of his Kingdom and Glory, and a Joint-heir with our exalted Redeemer. And this is so enobling a Privilege, so incomparable a Benefit, that the Apostle John, in the Contemplation of it, breaks out into a Rapture of Wonder and Gratitude, Behold, what manner of Love the Father has bestow'd upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God, John iii. 1. Let us then account it the highest ground of rejoicing, That our Names are written in Heaven.

III. Let those of us that belong to that part of God's Family that have their present Abode on this Earth, duly consider and improve the Relation we stand in to that part of his Family that have their Residence in Heaven.

We may observe, That the inspired Writer to the Hebrews, represents all true Christians as already come (in Relation in Faith and Hope) to Mount Zion above, to the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to the innumerable Company of Angels, to God the judge of all, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect, Heb. xii. 22, 23. We are Burgeses of that heavenly Jerusalem, of which they are actual Inhabitants. We are Children of the same Father; Fellow-Servants with those glorious Angels; our Names are inroll'd in Heaven, as Heirs of that Glory which they are entered on the Possession of. We are travelling towards that celestial Canaan where they now dwell, and enjoy the Plenty of that promised Land. And we hope to make up a part of that General Assembly and Church of the First-born. Let us then rejoice in this honourable and happy Alliance to that heavenly Community above. Let us contemplate with pleasure their blessed Lot in the Regions of Light, and earnestly aspire to the Felicity they now enjoy. Let us not be slothful, but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promises. Let us that are compassed with such a Cloud of Witnesses, run the Race that is set before us with (persevering) Patience, looking to Jesus the Author and Finisher

Finisher of our Faith, &c. Heb. xii. 1, 2. Let us so run that we may obtain that immortal Prize which they have won. Let us, instead of affecting a Conformity to this sinful World in its corrupt Customs and Manners, become more conform'd to those blessed Inhabitants of a better, in their god-like Temper and Disposition, in their heavenly Works and Joys. If a Heathen could say, "O glorious Day, when I shall go to that Divine Assembly of vertuous Souls, and escape out of this defiled Crowd here." How much

greater reason have we that enjoy the far clearer Light of Divine Revelation to entertain and fill our Minds with the joyful Hopes, that e'er we shall be translated to the Family of God above, and be there the happy Associates of the Spirits of just Men made perfect, who now behold the unveiled Face of their heavenly Father, are at Home with their blessed Saviour in the Mansion of Glory he had prepared for them, has now received them into, that where he is, they may be also.

S E R M O N XXV.

On the Occasion of the DEATH Of the Late
Sir Arth. Langford, Bar. Preach'd at Woodstreet,
DUBLIN, April the 8th, 1716.

Rev. xiv. 13.

And I heard a Voice from Heaven, saying to me, Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord, from henceforth, yea saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their Labours, and their works do follow them.



HIS memorable and divine Sentence that is here recorded with so peculiar Solemnity, highly deserves our most attentive Consideration, and suitable Improvement.

'Tis a Sentence delivered by a Voice from Heaven, both to intimate to us the great Importance and Weight of it; and to confirm our Faith in the Truth of it as certain and unquestionable. And the inspired Penman is commanded to write it down, that it may stand on Record, for the perpetual Use, and lasting Consolation of the Church of God, and of all the sincere and faithful Members of it to the end of Time.

'Tis true indeed many learned and judicious Expositors suppose these Words to have some special reference to some particular Period and Time of the Christian Church, from that Expression, [*ἀπ' αὐτῶν*] which we render, *henceforth*, or *from this Time*.

Thus some suppose that the Words more eminently refer to the Case of such as die in the Lord, by dying as Martyrs in his Cause, and sealing his Truth with their Blood. And particularly of such as suffered Death in the Defence of uncorrupted Christianity, in opposition to the Delusions and Abominations of Popery. And they suppose this truly divine Sentence opposed to the blind and furious Anathemas which the Apostate Church of Rome so uncharitably and presumptuously darts against all whom they brand as Hereticks for refusing to comply with their Errors, Idolatry and Antichristian Tyranny.

But tho' they thus rashly censure them as accursed Hereticks, yet the Spirit of God pronounces a quite

contrary Sentence upon them; he declares them to be Blessed in their Death, assuring them they shall rest from their Labours, and their Works shall follow them.

Others suppose these Words to refer to the peaceable Times of the Christian Church.

Some refer them to those Times that passed before the Rage of Antichristian Persecution began; Others to the happy Times that should succeed the Destruction and Fall of Mystical Babylon. Accordingly they expound them concerning the peculiar Privilege and Happiness of those that should peaceably enter into their everlasting Rest, either before that terrible Storm of Antichristian Persecution arose, or after it was laid and calmed. Such being either seasonably removed from the Evils to come, or gone off the Stage when they were past and gone.

But all do agree, That the Words contain a certain and undoubted Truth, as they are applicable to every faithful deceased Servant of Christ in every Age. All such as die in the Lord are truly Blessed, because they are so for the Reasons here assigned, viz. *That they may rest from their Labours, and their Works shall follow them.* And 'tis in this general and comprehensive Sense, that I would at present consider and apply them.

We have then in the Words,

First, A General Assertion, *Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord.*

Secondly, we have the Reasons assign'd, why such are pronounced Blessed, viz. *That they may rest from their Labours, and their Works shall follow them.*

First, we have here a General Assertion laid down, *Blessed are the Dead that die in the Lord.*

In speaking to this important Truth,
I. I shall consider, who are here describ'd, viz.
The Dead that die in the Lord.

II. The gracious Sentence pronounced upon them,
viz. That they are Blessed.

I. We are to consider, who are here describ'd, viz.
The Dead that die in the Lord.

'Tis indeed true, That those Martyrs who have cheerfully laid down their Lives in the Cause of Christ, and freely undergone a violent Death in defence of his sacred Truth, and pure Worship, may in a more eminent sense be said to have died in the Lord. Because they have died on his account and for his sake; they have sacrificed their Lives, to bear their Testimony to his Word, and to maintain his Cause and Interest in the World. 'Tis for his sake, that they were by their blood-thirsty Enemies killed all the Day long, and accounted as Sheep for the Slaughter (a). 'Tis their inviolable Fidelity to him that made them prefer his Honour before all the desirable Enjoyments of Life, and before Life it self.

But we have no Reason to confine the Sense of this Expression to those that suffer Martyrdom. Since 'tis used in other Places of the Holy Scriptures concerning all the faithful Disciples and Followers of Christ, who are departed this Life. All such are represented as fallen asleep in Christ. (b) And we read elsewhere, That the Dead in Christ (an Expression comprehensive of all deceased Saints) shall rise first, when he shall descend from Heaven with a Shout, with the Voice of an Archangel, and with the Trump of God (c).

And if we take the Expression in this just Latitude, our dying in Christ may import,

Partly, The State in which every true Christian dies.

Partly, The Excellent Frame and Disposition of Soul wherein he dies.

1. Our Dying in the Lord may import the State in which every true Christian dies.

As all true Christians are by a living Faith implanted into the Son of God, united to him as their vital Head, and made the Living Members of his Mystical Body; so Death it self does no way dissolve their Relation and Union to their Blessed Lord. They are his, both Living and Dying; who therefore both died and rose and revived again, that he might be the Lord, both of the Living and the Dead (d).

As to their departed Souls, they are represented as present with the Lord, when absent from the Body (e). Or (as we may paraphrase the Emphatical Expressions used in the Original) when they quit these Earthly Tabernacles to which they were confined, while they sojourned on this Earth as Strangers in a Foreign Land, they go to those Regions of Light which they regard as their Native Country, their Everlasting Home and Habitation; and where they shall enjoy the blissful Presence and Sight of their glorify'd Redeemer. And therefore I can see no solid Ground for the Opinion of some ancient Christian Writers (reviv'd of late by some modern Divines) that asserts the Souls of deceased Saints to be in some middle Place different from this Earth and from the highest Heavens. 'Tis observable that when the Apostle Paul speaks of the whole Family of God, he assigns no other Places of their different Abodes, but Heaven and Earth (f); and when he himself expected upon his departure hence to be with Christ, we have just Reason to conclude, that he expected to be where he now is, and that is doubtless in the highest Heavens.

But to return from this (tho' no unseasonable Digression) the Souls of deceased Saints are at Death

as well as in this present Life, the Objects of the peculiar Love of their indeared Lord, and go out of this World in a state of Acceptance and Favour with him. He graciously hears and answers the devout Requests of their departing Spirits, when with dying Stephen they call on him, and say, Lord Jesus, receive my Spirit (g). He who was once Dead, and now lives for evermore, and who has the Keys of the unseen World (h), and of Death (the dark Passages into it) sends his Guard of Angels to conduct their departing Souls into those blissful Mansions in his Father's House, where he is gone before to prepare a Place for 'em, And where they find his gracious Promise in part accomplished, That where he is, there his Servants shall also be (i). He therefore died for them, that whether they wake (by continuing to act in the Body) or whether they sleep (by resting from their present Labours in it) they may live together with him (k). As to their Bodies themselves, which are at Death deposited in the Grave, our Blessed Lord owns a Relation to them, and Interest in them. Their very Dust it self is under his peculiar Guardianship and Care. And tho' these mortal Bodies of theirs are at present the Captives and Spoil of Death, over which it seems to triumph as a mighty Conqueror, yet they are Prisoners of Hope. They are a part of our Lord's Purchase, which he will in due Time release from the Power of Death, when he comes to conquer that last Enemy, and to consummate the great Work of Redemption, by putting our entire Nature into the Possession of that glorious Immortality which he has procured for us, and reveal'd to us. And accordingly, all true Christians are represented as waiting for their compleat Adoption, to wit, the Redemption of the Body (k). For 'tis then they shall be most eminently manifested to be the Children of God, by being Children of the Resurrection (l).

How justly then may those be said to die in the Lord, whom neither Life nor Death shall separate from his Love (m)! Who in Death as well as Life, retain their Union to him, and Alliance with him. Whose Souls are receiv'd into his immediate Presence, to live with him for ever; and whose Bodies are reserv'd in the safe Dormitory of the Grave, to be made in due Time Partakers of a glorious endless Life, when he shall come by his powerful Voice, to call 'em (as he did Lazarus) out of their Tombs, and by a marvellous transforming Change, to fashion them like to his own glorious Body, by that mighty Power, whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself (n). But,

2. Our dying in the Lord may farther imply, the excellent Frame and Disposition wherein a true Christian dies.

Those divine Principles, those devout Affections to his blessed Redeemer, which animated a true Christian through the whole Course of his regenerate Life, continue with him to his last Moments. And they are so far from being extinguish'd by Death, that they often upon the Approach thereof, exert themselves with greater Vigour and Vivacity.

His Soul is under the governing Influence of divine Faith, and Hope, and Love.

A living Faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave himself for him, is one of those excellent Principles, by which a true Christian not only lives; but also dies. What we read concerning those Saints that liv'd before the Coming of Christ, is much more applicable to those that have enjoy'd and improv'd the clearer Light of the Gospel Revelation; These all died in Faith, being persuaded of, and imbracing the Divine Promises; confessing themselves Strangers and Pilgrims

I i i

grims

[a] Rom. viii. 36. [b] 1 Cor. xv. 18. [c] 1 Thes. iv. 6. [d] Rom. xiv. 8, 9. [e] 2 Cor. v. 8. [f] Eph. iii. 15. [g] Acts vii. 59. [h] Acts Rev. i. 18. [i] John xiv. 23. [j] 1 Thes. v. 10. [k] Rom. viii. 23. [l] Luke xx. 36. [m] Rom. viii. 22. [n] Phil. iii. 21.

grims on this Earth, and declaring that they fought for a better, even an heavenly Country (a). By this Principle they have persever'd to the End, in the Belief of that heavenly Doctrine which their Saviour has reveal'd, and in the Allegiance and Fidelity they ow'd to their Lord-Redeemer, and in their humble Reliance on his Power and Faithfulness, for the Accomplishment of his great and precious Promises, and especially those that relate to an unseen State of future Glory. By this Faith they have commended their departing Spirits (as Stephen did his) into his gracious Hands, being persuaded of his Ability, to keep what they had committed (as a Depositum or Trust) to him, to the great Day of his glorious Appearance (b).

Their divine Hope as well as Faith, continued to the End. They had cast this Anchor of their Souls (not downward but upward) within the Vail. And it prov'd sure and steadfast, not only to carry them through lesser Storms during their Voyage through this tempestuous Sea, but even through that last and most terrible Storm that brought on the great Shipwreck of Nature. In the Strength of this Hope their Souls came safe to the blissful Shore of the World above, where they cou'd with Serenity and Joy, look back on those boisterous Waves, by which this crazy Vessel of the Body was rent and torn. They regarded not Death as miserable Worldlings do, as the utter Extinction of their Hopes, but rather as the begun Accomplishment of them; even as the happy Season, when their Faith shou'd be turn'd into Sight, and their Hope into uninterrupted joyful Fruition.

Their Love to their blessed Lord was a Flame too strong for the Waters of Death it self to quench. What he once said with respect to them, That having loved his own, he lov'd 'em to the End (c), may be in some measure apply'd to them, that having sincerely lov'd their blessed Lord, they lov'd him to the End. And it was this their superlative Affection to him, that made them willing to be absent from the Body, that they might be present with him. It was this noble Principle that made them desirous to depart, and to be with Christ, as accounting it (in it self) incomparably better and more eligible than to continue in the Flesh. It was this made them relish such a Pleasure in that gracious Promise of his, Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, as to echo back, Amen, even so come Lord Jesus. It was this made them like Elijah, when he saw the Chariot and Horses of Fire prepar'd for him, chearfully to ascend to the Regions of Light and Love, and without any reluctance, to drop this Mantle of Flesh here below.

And how justly may those be said to die in the Lord, that die in the Exercise of such a lively Faith and Hope in him, and such an ardent Love to him!

'Tis true indeed, that all sincere Christians do not die in those Circumstances, that give 'em the Occasion and Capacity to declare to others these inward holy Motions and Exercises of their departing Souls. Some are snatch'd off so suddenly, as to have no leisure for them. Others are so sunk under the Pressure of bodily Infirmities, so oppress'd with violent Pains, (that obstruct the Exercise of their reasonable Powers) that their Sun seems to set in a Cloud. But as their departing Souls may feel those inward Exercises of their Divine Faith, and Hope and Love, which they are not able to express; so we have not the least reason to draw any uncomfortable Conclusions, in reference to their final State, from their present inability to manifest their pious Sentiments in their dying Moments. If they belong to Christ, we are sure these Graces are the predominant and reigning Principles in their Hearts, and would exert themselves in the Manner I have now describ'd, if

their genuine Actings were not thus prevented and hindered.

Having thus consider'd, who those are that die in the Lord; I proceed,

Secondly, To consider the Character here given of them, viz. That they are Blessed.

And here we may observe, that they are represented as Blessed or Happy, while they are with respect to us, and this World of ours, consider'd as dead: 'Tis not said, that the dead who die in the Lord shall be blessed, (viz. at the Time of our Saviour's final Appearance, and of the general Resurrection); but that they are (even now) blessed or happy. They are already in a most desirable and blissful State, actually possess'd of unspeakable Happiness begun, as well as Expectants of that additional Degree of it, which is reserv'd for them, when their Souls shall at the joyful Coming of Christ, be reunited to their glorified Bodies. That God who owns himself to be their God by a peculiar and distinguishing Relation, is not (as our Saviour observes) the God of the Dead, but of the Living. They are indeed to an Eye of Sense, and to outward Appearance, and to all the visible Functions of this Animal Life, dead. Their Bodies visibly appear to us as a Lump of lifeless and unactive Dust. That nobler intellectual Substance that animated them, does, as to us, vanish and disappear, leaving nothing behind but the ghostly Ruins and Remains of this Tenement of Clay. But what is said of other Enemies, may be as truly said of Death, the last Enemy, that it can only kill the Body, but is not able to extinguish the Life of the Soul (d). Our dislodged Souls do not cease to act and live, when they cease to animate these organized Clods of Earth. They return to God who gave them (e), even to him the Father of Spirits, whose immediate Offspring they are. They are with that blessed Saviour who redeem'd them, and into whose Hands they, by Faith, committed themselves. They enjoy his immediate blissful Presence, in whom they have believ'd, and whom they have sincerely lov'd and serv'd. They are at Home with him. They are actually come to the innumerable Company of Angels, and to the Spirits of just Men made perfect. They join with them in their honourable Work, and share with them in their unconceivable Joys. In a word, they are blessed and happy beyond what we can in this State of Distance and Darknes conceive or express.

Nor is it any valid Objection against this their initial Happiness, that the Scriptures sometimes speak of their Reward, as if it commenc'd at the final Resurrection. Because such Expressions may be justly understood of that consummate Reward, which they shall then by a solemn and publick Sentence of their final Judge, be put into the full Possession of.

I come therefore,

Secondly, To consider the Reasons assign'd, why the dead that die in the Lord, are pronounced Blessed or Happy, viz. because they rest from their Labours, and their Works follow them.

I shall distinctly consider each of these Reasons.

1. The Dead that die in the Lord are blessed, because they rest from their Labours.

'Tis here observable, that a Christian's Life is represented as a Course of continual Labours; and the Word in the Original [κόπος] properly signifies difficult and toilsome, and painful Labours.

Practical Christianity is not a lazy Profession consistent with our carnal Ease and Sloth, but an active and truly laborious Exercise. A true Christian must, in his extensive Work and Service, expect a constant Opposition and striving of the Flesh against the Spirit. He cannot perform the sublime and spiritual Duties incumbent on him, without frequently contending against

[a] Heb. xi. 13, 14, &c. [b] 2 Tim. i. 12. [c] John xiii. 1. [d] Mat. x. 28. [e] Eccles. xii.

against the Reluctancy of a carnal Mind and a backward disinclined Heart. He must yet look for a stronger Opposition from the Powers of Darkness, who will restlessly endeavour to regain the Possession they have lost, and at least to lay all imaginable Rubs and Discouragements in the Way of his Duty. He must lay his Account for the like Opposition; from the Flatteries or Frowns of a malignant World that lies in Wickedness. He must, in his holy Course, continually stem the Tide, and swim against the Stream of the corrupt Customs and sinful Examples of a defiled and defiling World. And this can never be effectually done without great Labour and Strife, Self-denial and Patience, holy Fortitude and Resolution, and considerable Diligence and Watchfulness. And therefore this religious Course is fitly compar'd to a Race, to a Combat, to a Warfare, which are all difficult and laborious Exercises.

How great then must the Happiness of those be, that have so successfully run their Race as to obtain the incorruptible Prize! That have so fought the good Fight (or striven the good Strife) of Faith, as to lay hold on eternal Life! Whose Warfare is happily accomplish'd, and who after a tedious Combat are come off Conquerors, and gone to inherit the immortal Crown! How happy are they who have finished their (difficult) Course with Joy, and after all their Labours and Sufferings are entred into the promis'd everlasting Rest! Happy are they who have no Remains of indwelling Sin to complain of; who are now above the Reach of all Temptations, being lodg'd in that heavenly Paradise where the seducing Serpent can never enter! Who are releas'd from all the afflictive Evils of this Life, that extorted so frequent Groans from them; and are gone to those Regions of Light and Joy, where there is no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, nor Pain, but all these Evils are pass'd away, and God has for ever wip'd away all Tears from their Eyes! Happy they whose painful Work and Trials are over, and for whom an eternal Repose and Sabbathism remains (a)!

Only here we must not mistake, as if this Rest from their Labours, which is here assigned as the Reason of the Blessedness of those who have died in the Lord, imported their being in a State of inactive Insensibility and Sleep. On the contrary, those happy Souls, that are deliver'd from the Burden of the Flesh, have their intellectual Powers perfected, and rais'd to the utmost Activity and Vigour; and they are thereby capable both to glorify and to enjoy the blessed God in another Manner and Measure, than the Imperfection of our present State can admit. They are fitted for higher Services than they can here perform, and for more ravishing Joys than frail Mortality can bear. They are by the immediate Vision of the Divine Glory fully transform'd into the Divine Likeness.

But here is one vast Difference between their past and present State. In their past State, their Duty was, thro' the continual Opposition and Struggle which they meet with (both from within and from without) a really difficult and painful Labour. Whereas in their present State, their heavenly Work is their sweetest Entertainment, and their Duty is their perpetual Delight. Christian Sabbaths on Earth are to holy Souls their greatest Pleasure, and the sweetest Foretastes of Heaven. And therefore their future Happiness is very fitly represented as a perpetual Sabbathism; and all their painful Labours here prepare them for this spiritual eternal Rest.

But,

2. The Dead that die in the Lord are blessed, because their Works follow them.

Or, their Works accompany them, and go along with them; (for 'tis not ἀκολουθεῖ ἔργα αὐτῶν, but μετ' αὐτῶν.)

Now that this Consideration bespeaks the Blessedness of those deceased Saints that die in the Lord, will appear, if we consider the genuine Import of it.

By their Works we must, no doubt, understand their good and holy Works: All the Instances of their Piety towards God, their Justice and Charity towards Men, and their Sobriety in the due Government of their Passions and Appetites, and all those that were the genuine Effects and Indications of an heavenly Spirit and Disposition.

Now these good Works are fitly said to accompany or go along with those that die in the Lord.

1. As these Works will be solid Evidences of their Sincerity in their Christian Profession.

We may justly suppose, that every Christian will at Death undergo a Particular, as preparatory for the general Judgment; and here the Sincerity or Hypocrisy of every Man's Profession will be judg'd by the genuine Fruits it has produc'd. 'Tis not every Man that has call'd our Saviour his Lord, shall be own'd and accepted by him; but he that has done the Will of his heavenly Father. To others, notwithstanding the specious external Profession they have made, he will say, Depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity, I know you not (b).

Our Faith in him will then, and then only be own'd as unfeigned, and as the precious Faith of God's Elect, when it has purify'd our Hearts, and sanctify'd our Lives; when it has enabled us to overcome the World, and the manifold Temptations thereof; when it has prompted us to maintain (or to excel in) good Works, according to our Abilities and Opportunities for them; when it has been the living Spring of sincere and universal Obedience: So that our Faith will be justify'd and perfected by our Works, and thereby distinguish'd from that dead Faith of Hypocrites, that has been barren of these holy Fruits.

Our Love to our blessed Saviour will then appear to be sincere and superlative, when it has prompted us to keep his Commands; when it has discover'd it self in the Frequency and Fervour of our publick and private Acts of Devotion; and in our zealous Endeavours to advance the Interests of his Kingdom, according to all the Advantages and Talents we have been entrusted with; when it has powerfully incited us to all Acts of beneficent Kindness to his indigent Members, and inclin'd us, as we had opportunity, to do good to all, but especially to them of the Household of Faith (c). It will then appear that it was a Love, not in Word and Tongue only, but in Truth and Deed.

In a Word, our Works will accompany us into the other World, as the best and the most authentick Testimonials we can produce of our past Integrity; and they are such solid, such substantial Evidences of it, as will be allow'd at the Bar of our final Judge.

Only here I would subjoin by way of Caution, that I speak of such Works as are good, not only as to the Matter, but as to the Manner of them. Such as are by a sincere Intention directed to the Glory of God, as their great End; such as are perform'd out of Obedience to his Command, and with a sincere Concern to approve our selves to his all-seeing Eye; such as spring from a Principle of superlative Love to him, &c.

2. The good Works of such as die in the Lord, may be said to accompany, or go along with them, in order to their being liberally rewarded according to the Tenure of God's gracious Promise.

'Tis true indeed, we must by no means conceive, that any good Works of ours can enable us to claim Heaven as a Reward of Debt from the strict Justice of God: For after we have done our best, we must (as our Lord has taught us) own our selves unprofitable Servants, that have only done what was commanded.

Nay,

Nay, we have done that in so very imperfect and defective a manner, as to need Mercy of God to forgive our manifold Failures, and to accept our poor Endeavours to glorify and serve him. We must therefore look for the heavenly Felicity no otherwise than as a *Reward of Grace*; a Reward which no Works of ours (how laborious, how expensive soever) can bear any Equality or Proportion to. We must look for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus to eternal Life, and receive it as the Gift of God thro' him, the Fruit and Result of his Merits, not of ours.

But since we are expressly told, that *we shall be judged according to our Works*; since eternal Life is promis'd to them that seek for Honour, Glory and Immortality, by patient continuance in well-doing: Since our blessed Lord (in the Account which himself gives us of the Process of his final Judgment) is pleas'd to assign the good Works of his faithful Servants, as the Reason and Ground of that favourable Sentence he will pass upon them, *Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from before the Foundation of the World; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me Meat, thirsty, and ye gave me Drink, a Stranger, and ye took me in, naked, and ye clothed me, (a) &c.* We may hence clearly see, that the good Works of deceased Saints will accompany them into the other World, to secure to them that glorious Recompence of Reward that divine Bounty and Grace has been pleas'd to assign unto them. Not only their publick Acts of Devotion; but those Prayers they pour'd out in their Closets and secret Retirements; not only their open Acts of Liberality, but those *Alms which their Right Hand has distributed without the Knowledge of their Left*, shall accompany them in order to their being openly own'd and rewarded. In a Word, all their good Works, even such as never fell under the Notice and Observation of their Fellow-Creatures, will appear upon Record. None of them (not so much as the *Widow's Mite*, or a Cup of cold Water given to a Disciple in the Name of a Disciple, by such as had no more to give) will be forgotten, or go unrewarded.

3. The good Works of such as die in the Lord, will accompany or go along with them, as Matter of their sweet and comfortable Reflections.

All their difficult or costly Services, all their painful Labours, all the reproachful or injurious Usage they have patiently suffer'd for the Sake of Christ and Righteousness, all the self-denying Instances of their dutiful Obedience, all the genuine Fruits of their fervent Love to our blessed Lord and to his Members, will be delightful in the Review, and be a perpetual Spring of Peace and Consolation to their Minds. A good Conscience will be to them a continual Feast.--- *Olim hæc meminisse juvabit.* They will contemplate the past Instances of their Duty with a fresh pleasure, and with adoring Thoughts of that powerful Grace of God that made them his Workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to those good Works in which he had ordain'd (or prepar'd) them to walk. They will review them not with any proud and self-exalting Thoughts, but with an humble Admiration of that distinguishing Grace, that has made its own Strength appear in their Weakness, and has made those Hearts, which were once a barren Soil, productive of all these holy Fruits, inciting them to abound in every good Word and Work, and to do all Things thro' Christ strengthening them.

And well may those deceased Saints, that died in the Lord, be represented as truly blessed, when their Works shall thus go along with them, as Evidences of their past Sincerity, in order to their receiving that liberal and glorious Reward that shall be allotted them; (a Reward infinitely surpassing not only their Deserts,

but their very Thoughts and Expectations;) and when they will be such a pleasing Entertainment, such a Source of ravishing Joy in their grateful Reflections upon them.

It now remains, that we make some practical Improvement of this important Subject.

Are the Dead that die in the Lord truly blessed? And that because they rest from their Labours, and their Works go along with them?

Then,

1. This Subject speaks no Comfort, but rather Terror to such, whose wicked Practices are utterly unsuitable to their Christian Profession.

How can such as never sincerely liv'd to the Honour of their blessed Redeemer, nay, whose irreligious and unholy Life has been rather a Stain and Blemish to that sacred Livery of his which they wear, be suppos'd to die in the Lord! How can they expect to die in a State of Acceptance and Favour with him, whose Hearts were never inflam'd with any ardent Affection to him, who never made it the Study of their Lives to glorify and serve him, and whose dead and ineffectual Faith never produc'd any living Fruits of holy Obedience? All such Workers of iniquity our blessed Lord has plainly forewarn'd, that he will at the great Day openly disown them, and disclaim any Relation to them (b). Such have no pious Labours in his Service to rest from, having been rather employ'd in the Drudgery of Satan, and in the Service of diverse Lusts and Pleasures, of which they can expect no other Wages than eternal Death. Their Works shall indeed accompany them into the other World; but his only to be the sad Evidences of their Hypocrisy and Insincerity of their Christian Profession, to justify and aggravate their final Condemnation. Their Works shall go along with them, to rise up in Judgment against them, and to expose them to that Tribulation and Anguish, Indignation and Wrath, that is denounced against every Soul of Man that doth Evil (c). Their Works shall attend them, to furnish an enraged Conscience with just Matter of perpetual Accusation, and of the most stinging Reproaches, and bitter Reflections on their own inexcusable Guilt; to supply constant Food to the Worm that never dies, and Fuel to the Fire that shall never be quenck'd.

2. This Subject suggests to us ground of abundant Consolation, in Reference to our pious Christian Relatives and Friends that have dy'd in the Lord.

Whatever Reason we have to mourn over our own Loss, by our being depriv'd of the Advantages of their desirable Society and Converse, and the Benefit of their wise Councils and kind Assistance: We have no Reason to mourn on their Account, but much to rejoyce in the Contemplation of their present happy State. Our Loss, how great soever, is their much greater and unspeakable Gain. We have no Reason to regard them as wholly lost and dead, because they are dead to this World of ours. There is a glorious World above, which their departing Souls are entered into; where they enjoy infinite more desirable Society, are employ'd in much more noble Work, and partake of higher Joys than we can now conceive. Were it possible for our selfish Wishes to call them back into this World again, we could not do them a greater Diskindness and Injury. This were to call them back to those painful Labours, from which they have sweetly rest, to that tedious Warfare which they now successfully accomplish'd, to those wearisome Conquests, over which they came off Conquerors, and now triumph. If we truly lov'd them, we wou'd not (were that in our Power) bring them down from those Mansions of Light to this Vale of Tears, from those undefiled Regions of Bliss to this polluted and miserable Spot of Earth; they may justly say to us, as our Saviour once

[a] Matt. xxv. 34, 35, 36, &c. [b] Matt. vi. 21, 22, &c. [c] Rom. ii. 7, 8, &c.

once said to his Disciples, *If ye loved me, ye wou'd re-joyce, because I go to my Father.*

And, blessed be God, we have this solid ground of Consolation concerning several Members of this Christian Society, who have lately finish'd their Course, and now rest from their Labours. And we have so in particular in Reference to that excellent Member of it (the late Sir Arthur Langford, Bart.) whose Death has given Occasion to my insisting on this Subject.

I have had the Honour of his Acquaintance and Converse now upwards of Thirty Years. And I shall suggest nothing concerning him, but what is grounded on my own Knowledge and Observation, and what I apprehend may be useful to excite others to an Imitation of what appear'd truly Amiable and Praise-worthy in him.

I studiously omit the mention of his *Descent*, and the Alliance it gave him to some noble Families in this Kingdom. These are Advantages that argue no real Excellency and Worth in those that are possess'd of them. To be *born of God*, and *born from above*, is a far higher Honour than the most illustrious Ex- traction on Earth can give.

He had, thro' the Benefit of pious Education, imbib'd betimes the Principles of the Christian Religion; and his early Acquaintance with those Holy Scriptures, in which it is compleatly deliver'd, as well as with those excellent Books that have been publish'd in Defence of it, had so rivetted in his Mind the firm Belief of it, that I never found him any way shaken by the vile Attempts of the Infidels of this Age, to decry the Inspiration and Authority of those sacred Books. He was One that truly believ'd and reverenc'd the Gospel of Christ, and regarded it not only as a *System of heavenly Doctrines*, but as a *Rule of Life*. And tho' he did not wholly neglect the Perusal of the most important Controversial Writings; yet he took greater Pleasure in Books of practical Divinity. He had entertain'd true Notions of *Primitive Christianity*, as describ'd in the New Testament, and had learn'd to distinguish it from the *unnecessary Appendages*, and the *corrupt Additions* of succeeding Ages, that only adulterate the *Simplicity* and *Purity* of it. He had a just Abhorrence of *Popery*, as distinguish'd from our *common Christianity*, not only on the account of its manifold pernicious Errors, but especially of that vile *Idolatry*, that monstrous *Tyranny*, that gross *Uncharitableness*, and that *inhuman Cruelty*, that have reign'd so long in that Apostate Church. And tho' as to the unhappy Differences among our selves, his Judgment led him upon due Deliberation to espouse the unjustly despis'd Cause of Non-Conformity, and to adhere steddily to it; yet his *Charity* was truly *Catholic* and *Comprehensive*, extending to all that appear'd to *love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity*, notwithstanding their different Sentiments in such dubious and controverted Matters, as touch'd not the Essentials of the Christian Religion. For he valued himself and others more on the account of their being *sincere Christians*, than upon their being of *this or that sub-divided Denomination*; as sensible that the great Essentials of Christianity wherein they are agreed, are of far greater Importance and Moment, than those wherein they differ. He was strict and constant in keeping up the Exercises of Family-Religion, and thought it not beneath his Character to officiate himself, when Ministers were not present. His religious, his just and sober Conversation rendred him an exemplary Ornament to his Profession, and his extensive Charity an eminent Support of it. He was with respect to the Interests of the Kingdom a true Patriot, that shew'd a steady and unbiased Concern for the Liberties and Welfare of it, whenever any Occasion offer'd in the great Council of Parliament. But he had above all the Protestant Interest in these Kingdoms, and throughout Europe, truly at Heart. Among many other Evidences of

this that I cou'd produce, I shall only mention one, *viz.* That at several Times, during his long-continu'd Disorders, he wou'd in his audible Prayers, be much enlarg'd in begging of God the Restoration of the oppress'd Reformed Churches abroad, and the general Enlargement of the Interest of the Reformed Religion, as well as the Revival of practical Piety in these Lands. And such Petitions he offer'd with so remarkable Fervency, that when he seem'd to pray for the Continuance of his own Life, it was chiefly on this Account, that he might live to see the Answer of these Requests. And that these were not barren ineffectual Wishes, he has given a sensible Demonstration in his generous Liberality to the *French Refugees*, and in his Readiness to support the Interest of Religion in many Parts of the Kingdom, according to the considerable Ability God had entrusted him with. For, as he was bless'd with a plentiful Estate, so he had an *Heart and Hand* open and enlarg'd in doing Good. His Ear was attentive to all Motions of that kind, whenever his Judgment was satisfy'd that there was a Probability of what he gave turning to any valuable and beneficial Account. For his Charity was always under the Conduct of Judgment and Discretion. How kind and indulgent a Landlord he was to his Tenants, (perhaps in some Instances to an Excess) is sufficiently known, and his last Will (wherein he forgave them all one half Year's Rent, on Condition of paying off their Arrears) amply testifies. And as his living Single, and his utter Aversion to Luxury and Pomp, and to the Trouble and Snares of a promiscuous Conversation, led him to a more retir'd Way of Living, (wherein he divided his Time between the innocent Improvements of his Seat in the Country, and his Books) so he gave this as a farther Reason of his declining the usual Expences of an open Table, that he might have the more to spare for better Uses. And as his large Contributions on manifold Occasions, to such pious and charitable Uses in his Life-time, shew'd that *his liberal Heart devis'd liberal Things*; so his noble Benefaction at his Death will render his Memory honourable and precious to those that survive him, according to the known and just Maxim of the *Psalmist*, *The Righteous* (which must be there understood of the *Beneficent and Charitable*) *shall be had in everlasting Remembrance.*

But yet he was so far from being puff'd up with any proud Conceit of Merit from any good Works of his, that I have scarce observ'd any that reflected on their past Offences and Failures with a deeper Humility, and a more earnest Application to God thro' a Mediator, both for his pardoning Mercy and sanctifying Grace, and that express'd a more abasing Sense of his need of it.

I am well assur'd, That Death it self was no unwelcome Surprize to him. I cannot easily forget the last Words I heard him utter; being told, That our Lord Jesus had promis'd *to come quickly, and to bring his Reward with him*; and that it shou'd be the Language of our believing Souls, *Amen, even so come Lord Jesus*; he reply'd with an earnest Emotion, *I go to him, I go to him.*

He now rests from his Labours; and I am perswaded, that *his Works accompany him*, to evidence his Sincerity, to heighten his Reward, and to be Matter of delightful Reflexion in the Review of them.

3. This Subject should arm all sincere Christians against the inordinate Fear of Death.

Why should a Christian, that is conscious of his own Sincerity, be afraid to die? It were no wonder, if Death appear'd terrible to those, that apprehended it to be the utter Extinction of Life: Or to those, that were under a miserable Uncertainty and Darknes about a future State: Or to those, whose guilty Consciences carry the fearful Prefages and Fore-bodings of the Wrath to come: Or even unto those, that are under perplexing Doubts in Reference to their spiri-

tual State. But 'tis most unreasonable and unaccountable, that a Christian, whose Life is a continu'd Course of faithful Labours in the Service of his blessed Lord, shou'd dread the Thoughts of going to his everlasting Rest. Shou'd *Foreigners* in a strange Land be unwilling to return to their *Native Soil*? Shou'd those that are engag'd in a tedious *Warfare* regret, that 'tis *accomplish'd*, and that they are going to receive the immortal Crown? What, tho' the Passage by Death be dark and gloomy, when it leads to the Mansions of Light and Life? What, tho' we must close our bodily Eyes on this sensible World, when we shall open those of our Minds on the ravishing Glories of a better? What, tho' we must leave our endear'd Relations and Friends on Earth, when we shall go to far more desirable Society and Converses above? Especially, when we have the comfortable Prospect, that tho' we *part with them now in Tears*, we shall e'er long have a *joyful Meeting* with them in the Kingdom of God, where there will be no fear of any unwelcome Separation for ever. If then we believe, That for those who have *liv'd in Christ*, to die will be such unspeakable Gain, Death should not be such an Object of our Aversion and Dread. The Hopes of *being for ever with our blessed Lord*, shou'd reconcile us to it, and even render the Thoughts of it sweet and comfortable to us.

4. Let us all hence learn *so to live to our blessed Lord*, and *so to die in him*, that we may *rest from our Labours*, and our *Works may go along with us*.

Let us learn *to live to our blessed Lord*.

This is what he has by Dying for us, laid upon us the strongest Obligations to do. We must thus *live to him*, by making his *Glory the End*, his *Laws the Rule*, his *Service the principal Employment*, and his *Example the Pattern of our Life*. Our Life shou'd be made up of faithful and painful, constant and unweary'd Labours to promote the Interests of his Kingdom, and to further our own and others present and eternal Welfare. It shou'd be employ'd in Works of *Piety, Sobriety, Justice* and extensive *beneficent Charity*, according to our real Abilities. And 'tis such painful Labours as these, that must prepare us for that happy *Rest that remains for the People of God*. 'Tis such excellent Works as these, that will go along with us into the other World. We cannot carry our *Houses and Lands*, our *Bills and Bonds*, our *Riches or Honours* thither. These must all be left behind us, and *we go as naked out of this World as we came into it*. Nay, were it possible to carry any of these external Possessions or Privileges along with us, they wou'd be of no Significancy or Use to us. *Riches wou'd not profit in the Day of Wrath*. Earthly Treasures cou'd not purchase for us an eternal

Inheritance. Our secular Honours cou'd not intitle us to a Crown of Righteousness and Glory. We can reap no farther Advantage from them, than what must result from our past faithful Improvement of these Talents, for the Glory and Service of our great Lord that intrusted us with them.

But we may and shall carry with us the *spiritual Treasures of Wisdom and Holiness*. Our Christian *Graces and Vertues* will *accompany us*, and be our inseparable Attendants. All our *good Works and faithful Services* will *go along with us*. Our fervent Prayers and other Acts of Devotion; our Acts of beneficent Kindness to the Bodies and Souls of Men, will not be left behind. They will appear as Witnesses of our Sincerity; they will ascertain to us the glorious Fruit and Reward thereof; they will be a continual Spring of Peace and Joy to our Minds, when ever we look back upon them. O let us then, by abounding in them, *lay up a good Foundation (or a good Store and Treasure) against the Time to come, that we may lay hold on eternal Life (a)*. Let us not be *slotful*, but *Followers of them who thro' Faith and Patience inherit the Promises (b)*.

And as a true Christian should thus *live to his blessed Lord*, so it should be his earnest *Desire* and *Endeavour to die in him*.

'Tis indeed true, that if we *live to him*, we shall certainly *die in a State of Acceptance and Favour* with him, in whatever Circumstances Death may surprise and seize us; but if Death make more leisurely Approaches, it should be our Care, that our inward *Frame and Exercises* in our last Hours, may be suitable to our *State*, and to our *divine Hopes*. 'Tis highly desirable *to finish our Course with Joy*. We should be ambitious to glorify our blessed Redeemer *at Death* as well as *in Life*. 'Tis a becoming, a comfortable Sight, to behold a Christian encountering Death in the actual Exercise of a lively Faith in the Son of God, of an ardent Love to him, and a joyful Hope of being for ever with him. He should be concern'd, if God give him Leisure, and the free exercise of his intellectual Powers, to bear his Testimony to the holy Truths and Ways of Christ, with his dying Breath; and to commend his departing Soul with an ingenuous Affiance and Trust into the Hands of him that ransom'd it.

And blessed indeed are such as thus sincerely *live to the Lord*, and thus *believingly die in him*. Such *sweetly rest from their present Labours*; and their *Works go along with them*, in order to their receiving that transcendent and glorious Reward of Grace, that the boundless Love of God has prepar'd for all that sincerely love and serve him.

[a] 1 Tim. vi. 19. [b] Heb. vi. 12.

SERMON XXVII.

On OCCASION of the DEATH OF

Dr. D. CUMYNG. (who died Sept. the 8th.)

Preach'd at WOOD-STREET Sept. the 20th. 1724.

JOB xiv. v. 14.

If a man die shall he live again? All the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.



WHEN we seriously consider the vast and important Change that Death brings along with it; and that we our selves must certainly, and may suddenly die; it highly becomes every one of us to take up the wise Resolution of holy Job in the Text; *All the days of my ap-*

pointed time will I wait till my change come.

We find pious Job, in this Chapter, earnestly solliciting the great God's Compassion, to release him from the heavy Burthen of his present Afflictions and Miseries.

To that Purpose he insists on two Pleas. The one, drawn from the Shortness and Misery of human Life. The other, from the Impossibility of returning to it, after 'tis once extinguish'd. The former he insists on in the first six Verses of this Chapter. The latter he first urges with God, to obtain a merciful Release from his present Afflictions, from the 6th. Verse to the 14th. And in the Text he applies it to himself, as an Incitement to prepare for that solemn Change, that Death wou'd be attended with.

If a man die, shall he live again?

We must understand him here, as speaking of that animal Life, common to us with the Beasts that perish, while our Spirits dwell in Flesh, and are confin'd to these Earthly Bodies. He is not here speaking of the Essential Life of the Soul of Man, as if that were extinguish'd with his bodily Life. He speaks of Death in the following Words, not as an utter Extinction, but as a Change that he waited for. Nor must we un-

derstand him as intending to deny the Resurrection of the Body, of his Belief whereof, he elsewhere makes so solemn and noble a Profession. We may observe, with how remarkable a Preface he ushers it in, *Oh, that my words were now written! Oh, that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead, in the rock for ever! For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day, upon the earth. And tho' after my skin Worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God. Whom I shall see for my self, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another, tho' my reins be consumed within me.* Job XIX. 23. 24, 25, &c. And the Words following the Text, most probably, refer to the final Resurrection, *Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee. Thou wilt have a desire to the work of thine hands.* (see v. 15th.)

All the days.

We may observe, He does not measure his Time by that longer duration of Years, but that shorter one of Days. He reckons not upon Time at so great a Distance, but supposes that if it were measur'd by Days, the Number of 'em might easily be computed.

Of my appointed time.

He accounts not his Time of Life to be at his own disposal and command. He acknowledges its shorter or longer Duration to be fix'd by the Wisdom and Will of the great Lord of Life. As he himself (in the 5th Verse) declares, *Man's days are determin'd, the number of his months is with thee. Thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.*

I will wait till my change come

The Expression of *waiting for his change*, I shall in the Sequel consider as importing pious Job's Resolution. I wou'd only at present observe, That it implies, that he wou'd not use any irregular Means to hasten it. For tho' he groan'd under an heavy Load of Afflictions, and those of long continuance, yet he resolv'd to wait God's Leisure for a seasonable Release. He would not free himself from his painful Confinement to a distemper'd Body, by unlawfully

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breaking open the Prison-doors. A Practice, which however some Heathens have, by a gross Mistake, celebrated as an Instance of great *Magnanimity*, yet many of the Wiser of 'em have justly censur'd; not only as an Instance rather of *Weakness* and *Corardise*, but also as an unjustifiable Violation of the Divine Law, by presuming to quit our present Station, without the Order and Allowance of him that plac'd us in it.

I come now to consider, *Job's* pious Resolution. *All the days, &c. will I wait till my change come.*

In which Resolution, there are two Things observable, for our present Instruction.

I That Death brings along with it a remarkable Change to all, but especially a desirable one to all good Men.

II. That our serious Expectation of, and Preparation for that *Change*, shou'd be the chief Work and Business of our present Life.

I. Death brings along with it a remarkable *Change* to all Men, but especially to all good Men, a very desirable one.

And 'tis here most significantly represented to us under the notion of a *Change*, or *Alteration* of our present State.

1. There is something in this remarkable and solemn *Change*, common to all Mankind, whether Good or Bad.

Death puts an End to all the Temporal Good or Evil of this present Life. It brings a Writ of Ejectment to dispossess us of our Worldly possessions, and sends us naked out of this world, as we came into it. Our places on earth know us no more.

It buries all our admir'd secular Honours in the Dust, and leaves no visible Distinction between the Skull of a Prince and a Peasant. When the rich die, they carry nothing away; nor will their glory descend after 'em, Psal. xlix. 7. Death bereaves us of all those sensual Pleasures that depend on the Union of our Souls to these terrestrial Bodies. It forcibly rends us from the Embraces of our dearest Relations and Friends, and confines us to the solitary Grave, where we shall (as K. Hezekiah speaks) behold man no more, with all the inhabitants of this earth, Is. xxxviii. 11.

Death puts a Period to all the afflictive Evils of this present Life. 'Tis a safe Harbour and sure Retreat from all the Storms and Troubles of the most calamitous Condition here below; where no human Malice and Violence can ever reach us. It puts an End to all our present Sorrows and Griefs, by closing our Eyes on the sad Objects and Occasions of 'em. 'Tis the sovereign Opium that ministers Relief and Ease from all the grievous Pains of a distemper'd Body.

Death puts an End to all the Busy Affairs of this Temporal Life.

It stops us in the eager Prosecution of all our Worldly Projects and Designs. It hurries us of the Theatre and Stage of publick Actions and Business, and brings on that Night of Darkness, in which no man can work. The wearied Hireling there rests from all his painful Labours. It puts an End to all our worldly Cares and Toil, and leaves nothing visible of these sprightly Creatures we beheld a while ago, but a lifeless and unactive Lump of Clay.

But the most considerable *Change* that Death makes, is, That thereby we pass from a State of *Trial* to a State of *Retribution*.

Divine Revelation assures us, that our Time of Life here is but a State of *Probation* and *Trial*, preparatory for a State of future Rewards or Punishments. We are, as God's reasonable Creatures, the Subjects of his Moral Government. He that is the Author of our Beings, and has furnish'd us with intellectual and active Powers, does expect that we shou'd imploy them to his Honour, by our Obedience to those excellent Laws he has been pleas'd to prescribe. He, as our rightful and supreme Lord, has intrusted us with various Talents, that are to be used according to his Orders and Directions; and he will accordingly reward our Di-

ligence and Fidelity, in the due Improvement of 'em; or punish our wilful Negligence and Unfaithfulness. And sure I need not tell you, that enjoy the Light of the glorious Gospel, how peculiar and distinguishing Talents you are intrusted with, and how greatly you are concern'd to attend to that equitable Rule of God's judicial Proceedings, which our Saviour intimates, when he tells us, *To whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: And to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.* Luke xii. 48.

Now Death brings along with it this most important *Change*, from a *Probationary* State to a State of *Retribution*. 'Tis the Conclusion of the former, and our Entrance on the latter.

At Death, our Day of Trial is over. Our Time and Space of Preparation for a near Eternity is at an End. Our Seasons of Grace are past. Our Opportunities of Work and Service here cease. The Commission that constitutes us God's Stewards is recall'd, and our Account of our Stewardship requir'd. And as Death leaves us, Judgment will find us. An happy or miserable Eternity is then before us. Eternal Life or Death then awaits us. Accordingly as we have demean'd our selves in this probationary State, our dislodged Souls must take up their eternal Abode, either in the Mansions of Bliss (a Bliss inhauc'd by the delightful Prospect of the Glories of the Resurrection-day) or in the Regions of Darkness and Despair, (Which will be heightned by the dismal Expectation of the awful Day of publick final Judgment.)

And, O! what a solemn *Change* will this be, the Issues whereof will be of so infinite Moment and Importance to our endless Happiness or Misery? A *Change* so great, so certain, and so near, that we shou'd be most inexcusable, if we indulge our selves in the stupid Forgetfulness, or wilful inconsideration of it.

But I proceed.

2. To consider this *Change* as it more particularly relates to good Men.

And 'tis under this particular Consideration that the Text leads me to speak of it.

Job, we know, was a Man of whom God himself gives this honourable Testimony, *That he was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed Evil.* Job i. 8. And tho' that sudden and surprizing Scene of grievous Afflictions, (and those of long Continuance) by which his Patience was exercis'd, extorted many bitter Complaints from him about this unusual Conduct of Divine Providence; yet he still asserts his own Integrity in opposition to the harsh Censures of his mistaken Friends; and in the midst of his passionate Wishes for Death, to release him from his present Miseries, he intermixes some lively Expressions of his Faith and Hope, in reference to a future State, and the glorious Rewards of it. Such as those I mention'd Job xix. 25, 26, &c. And the Verse following my Text. To which I may add that noble Strain of his lively Faith, *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him, but I will maintain my ways before him. He also shall be my Salvation. For an Hypocrite shall not come before him.* Job xiii. 15, 16. And the happy *Change* that he reckon'd Death wou'd make in his State, made him so earnestly desirous of it. For he was doubtless animated, and acted by that Faith, by which he was persuaded of the Truth of those two great, and fundamental Articles of Religion, *That God is, and that he is the Rewarder of all that diligently seek him.* Heb. xi. 6. And his Expression of waiting for his *Change*, imports, That it was the Object both of his earnest Desire, and comfortable Hope.

Now that Death brings along with it a most desirable and happy *Change*, with respect to all truly good Men, will appear, if we compare a little their present Condition with that blessed State which by Death they enter upon.

They are here, while their Spirits dwell in Flesh, liable to all those afflictive Evils and Miseries that Sin has brought into this World. Their most desirable temporal

temporal Enjoyments are often either blasted, and like *Jonah's Gourd* quickly wither'd; or are embitter'd by many Crosses and Disappointments they met with. Their tender Sympathy with others, especially, their dear Relations and Friends, make 'em deep Sharers with 'em in their Troubles and Sufferings. They dwell themselves in houses of clay, whose foundation is in the dust; and these frail and crazy Bodies are subject to manifold painful Infirmities and Diseases that greatly allay all the present Comforts of Life. *The days of the years of their pilgrimage* (as *Jacob* complains) *are evil as well as few*. Gen. xlvii. 9. This World is to them but a vale of tears; a Scene of various successive troubles, that like *Job's* Messengers often tread upon the Heels of one another.

But Death conveys their dislodged Souls to a State, where God will wipe away all tears from their eyes, where there shall be no more death; nor sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. For the former things are passed away. Rev. 21. 4. It translates 'em to those Mansions of Bliss, where their Joys are without mixture or alloy; and their Pleasures in the Divine Presence flow with a constant and uninterrupted Stream; and where the Remembrance of their past Afflictions and Miseries serves only to inance the Satisfaction of their entire Deliverance from 'em. How happy a Change may we imagine, was it to pious *Lazarus*, to leave all his Wants and his Sores behind him, and to be safely convey'd by a Guard of Angels into *Abraham's Bosom*. Luke xvi. 22. Where all the Evils he had patiently suffer'd here, gave a sweeter Relish to his everlasting Consolation. v. 25.

Again, if we consider a good Man's spiritual State towards God, Death makes a most desirable and happy Change in it.

He here knows only in part, and sees spiritual and divine Objects, as thro' a glass, and darkly, (as in a Riddle) [*enigmatice*] 1 Cor. xiii. 9, 12. The clearest Apprehensions of the invisible God, that he can here attain, are but inadequate and defective. He discerns only some few Glimpses of the divine Glory shining out in the Works and in the Word of God. But alas! How many things relating to the essential Perfections of the Divine Nature, the mysterious Distinction in it between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are at present wrapp'd up in impenetrable Darkness and Obscurity! How many Things both in the Conduct of Divine Providence towards the World, and in the peculiar Dispensations of it towards his Church, appear to us attended with Difficulties, which we are at a loss how to solve, and oblige us to cry out with the Apostle *Paul*, *O the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!* Rom. xi. 33. 'Tis but little we know of the inferior Creatures round about us, and comparatively but little of our selves; and far less of the superior invisible World that we are hastning to. *We here walk by faith, and not by sight.* 2 Cor. v. 7. And alas! How often is our Faith, but weak and wavering, clouded with Darkness, puzzled and stagger'd with uncomfortable Doubts, that force us to cry out, as the poor Man, *Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief,* and with the Disciples, *Lord, increase our Faith.* Mark ix. 24. Luke xvii. 5.

But O! what an happy Exchange does the Soul of a dying Saint make, when his Faith is turn'd into Vision. When he that saw but thro' a glass, darkly, shall see face to face, and know as he is known. When he shall in God's light, see (glorious, convincing, and satisfying) light. Psal. xxxvi. 9. When he shall behold the brightest Manifestations of the Divine Glory in the Heavenly World, and shall have his intellectual Faculties enlarg'd, to take in a more comprehensive View of it. When his present uncomfortable Darkness shall be dispell'd, his uneasy Doubts resolv'd, and those Divine Truths, which before he endeavour'd to trace by a laborious Search, and cou'd, at best,

attain but an imperfect Discovery of, shall display their naked and unvail'd Beauty to his Eye. If the Queen of *Sheba* was so ravish'd when she beheld the admirable Order, and wise Management of King *Solomon's* Court, which before she had only heard the Fame of, that 'tis said, *There was no more spirit left in her,* 1 Kings x. 5. How much more transporting will it be to a pious Soul to enter into those Regions of Light, where it shall behold the inexpressible Glories of God's extensive and eternal Empire?

Again, a good Man, while in this State of sinful Imperfection, has many Remains of Corruption to struggle against, that render his present Life a continual State of spiritual Warfare. And these often extort that bitter Complaint from him, *O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?* Rom. vii. 24. Besides the manifold Temptations from without, that require his continual Vigilance to guard against and overcome, he finds a more dangerous Enemy within, even that flesh that lusts against the Spirit, and gives those Principalities and Powers, and rulers of the darkness of this world, which he is called to wrestle with, so great Advantage to assault, and too often foil him. Hereby he is often betray'd into more secret Declensions, and sometimes into more open Relapses. And alas, how often has he just Occasion to mourn over the Weakness and Languor of his Graces, (such as his Faith, his Hope, and his divine Love.) How often are his religious Duties themselves comparatively a dull and dispirited Exercise, in which there is little of the Fervour of true Devotion! How hard a Task does he find it to curb his unruly Passions, and to crush the secret Workings of Pride and vain Glory in his Breast!

But O happy Change, when his dislodged Soul shall put off all these hateful reliques of sin with this garment of flesh! When it shall be receiv'd into that Heavenly Paradise, where that seducing serpent and roaring lion can never enter either to tempt or molest! When one ravishing Sight of the Divine Glory shall fully transform him into the amiable Likeness of his God and Saviour; when the body of sin of which he so often complains, shall be entirely destroyed and abolished, upon the Dissolution of this mortal Body; and he shall be presented faultless before the presence of the divine glory, with exceeding joy, Jude 24. v. When his Will shall be perfectly conform'd to the good and acceptable Will of God, and he shall be entirely pleasing to him as well as perfectly pleas'd in him! When this feeble Spark of Divine Love which is here kindled in his Breast shall be blown up into a vigorous and active Flame, that shall render him all Life and Wing in his Service, and render his Homage and Duty to him his perpetual Delight!

Again, As our Graces here are but very imperfect, so are our spiritual Consolations and Joys.

Here, alas, Our manifold Follies and Failures often make work for bitter Repentance. They often cast a dark cloud over the Evidences of our own Sincerity; they eclipse the Light of God's Countenance, and provoke our offended Father to hide his face from us. So that those who are children of light often long walk in uncomfortable darkness. Besides the manifold Afflictions we meet with here greatly damp our spiritual Joys. And they too often prove a dangerous Temptation thro' our own Weakness, to question the Love of God, and to entertain desponding Thoughts of our being rejected and cast off by him. And hence we read such mournful Complaints of pious *Job* in this Book, of *David*, in several of the Psalms, of *Asaph* Ps. lxxvii at the beginning, of *Heman* Ps. lxxxviii throughout.

But O what a blessed Change does Death bring with it to every pious Soul, that at once scatters all his disconsolate Doubts and Fears, banishes all his Sorrows and Grievs; that turns all his mournful Complaints and Groans into triumphant Praises! What a ravishing Surprise is it to him, to be brought under the Conduct of a Guard of Angels into the Presence

of

of that blessed Saviour, in whom he has believed and trusted, and whom he has sincerely lov'd and serv'd; to be graciously receiv'd by him into those Mansions of his Father's House, where a Place is prepared for him; to behold his Glory, and to be admitted as a good and faithful servant into his everlasting joy; To behold the unveil'd Face of his heavenly Father, to be imparadis'd in the Bosom of divine Love, and partake of the most liberal Effusions of it for ever! O happy Change to be admitted as a Member of that blessed Community above, where there is no Eye that weeps, no Breast that sighs, no Tongue that complains! Where their divine Joy and Felicity is without Intermission or Alloy.

O blessed Change, to pass from a defiled World that lies drench'd in Wickedness into the Regions of perfect Light and purity; to go from the Communion of the Militant Church on Earth (whose Sufferings from Enemies without, and whose declining State from Corruptions or Dissentions within, they so bitterly bewail'd) to that triumphant Church above, all the Members whereof are adorn'd with shining Wisdom and spotless Holiness, and united in perfect Love to God and to one another! To pass from an hazardous and tedious Warfare to the Possession of an immortal Crown; from a wearisome Pilgrimage thro' this howling Wilderness into the heavenly Canaan; and from painful Labours into everlasting Rest: This is a Change so desirable, so advantageous and blissful that it is every way worth our aspiring to, and waiting for.

And this leads me to the

II Head of Discourse observable in the Words, *viz.* That our serious Expectation of, and Preparation for this Change shou'd be the chief Work and Business of our present Life.

And this Head I shall prosecute as the chief Branch of the Improvement I wou'd direct you to make of the foregoing Discourse.

I. Let me hence therefore exhort all of you to take up the pious Resolution of *Job* in my Text, *all the days of my appointed time will I wait till my change come.*

I have already suggested to you, that the most important Change that Death brings along with it, is our passing from a state of trial to a state of retribution. This the Heathens themselves had some tho' darker Notices of: But divine Revelation has given us the clearest Assurance of it. By that we are plainly told, that *as it is appointed unto Men once to die, so after Death Judgment succeeds*, Heb. ix. 7. And we are as evidently told, that the Gospel of Christ will be to all those that enjoy the Light of it, the Rule of that final Judgment, John xii. 48.

Now our waiting for it, implies

I. Our frequent Forethoughts and firm Expectation of it.

Let us then get this Persuasion firmly fix'd and rooted in our Minds, that we are accountable Creatures, whom our great Creator and supreme Lord has plac'd in this probationary State, has appointed the Time of it (shorter or longer as he in his wise Counsels shall determine;) and that it will issue in a State of Rewards or Punishments, according to the well or ill Improvement we make of it. Such a fixed Persuasion and Belief is the Foundation of true Religion, and contains the most powerful Motives to the serious Practice of it. And this the inspired Writer to the Hebrews plainly suggests, when he tells us, *without Faith* (even that Faith, which is the Substance or Subsistence, of things hoped for, &c.) *'tis impossible to please God, for he that comes unto God must believe, that he is, and that he is the Rewarder of all that diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 1 & 6. v. And as this Belief must be rooted in our Minds, so the genuine and excellent Effects it shou'd produce in our Hearts and lives must be promoted, by our frequent Meditations on this solemn and awful Change that Death brings along with it. Without such frequent Forethoughts, and such a lively Ex-

pectation of it, our Minds will be so taken up with the distracting Cares, or vain Amusements, or alluring Pleasures, and tempting Vanities of this present sensible World, as either totally to neglect all effectual Preparation for this solemn Change, or to make but slow Advances in it. So significantly does a devout Writer describe a Christian's life as a constant meditation on death.

II. Our waiting for this Change does chiefly imply our making the most effectual Preparation for it.

Our Forethoughts and Expectation of it will be of no Significancy and Avail to us, if they put us not on making such Provision for it, as will render this most important Change truly comfortable and happy to us. To imagine it a Matter of no great Consequence, whether we shall be adjudg'd to a State of endless Rewards or Punishments, whether we shall be Heirs of Heaven or Hell, whether we shall inherit the Kingdom of God, or be doom'd to that everlasting Fire prepared for the Devil and his Angels, is such a Thought as no considerate Man can be so stupid as to entertain. One wou'd think the very Principle of Self-love so deeply rooted in our Nature shou'd sufficiently prompt us to flee from the wrath to come, and to lay hold on eternal life. And sure it shou'd do so, if we used our considering Powers in matters that relate to our eternal Interest with the like Care and Caution, as we commonly use in the important Affairs that relate to this temporal Life.

As to those of you that have never entertain'd any serious Thoughts of this solemn Change, nor begun any Preparation for it, you have hitherto wofully neglected the most valuable end of Life. And your necessary Preparation must be begun, by an unfeigned Repentance for that past part of your Life that has been entirely alienated from God, and by a sincere Conversion to him, and a penitent Application to his pardoning Mercy thro' the atoning Blood of the great Mediator, thro' whom alone he is reconcileable and accessible to such guilty Sinners as you have been. It must be begun, by your voluntary Renunciation of the Service of Sin, and abandoning the Paths of Death and Hell, and your Entrance on a course of sincere and persevering Obedience. Till this necessary Step be taken you are utterly unprepar'd for this awful Change, and the Issues of Death can be to you no other than ruinous and miserable for ever. The Thoughts of Death and Judgment can be to your awakened Consciences no other than terrible and dismal. The Change that Death will make in your State will be rather the matter of your Aversion and Dread, than of your ardent Desire and comfortable Hope.

For those of you in whom this necessary Preparation is begun, it must be continued and carried on, by your continued Progress in the Ways of Faith and Holiness; by your daily Advances in a sober and righteous and godly Life; by your filling up all your relative Stations with the several Duties belonging to 'em, by your improving all Opportunities of receiving and doing good; by abounding in every good word and work; by a careful Redemption of your precious Time, and a faithful Management of all the Talents you are intrusted with, for the Honour of God, and the present or eternal Good of others; by your living above this World, while you only sojourn in it; by your frequent Forethoughts and realizing Views of an unseen Reward of future Glory, and earnest Aspiration of Soul to the blissful Possession of it; and in a Word, by having your Heart and Conversation in Heaven, where your most valuable Treasure is lay'd up, and your giving all Diligence to attain a full Assurance of Hope concerning your own Title to this future Blessedness. And to such prepared Souls, you have already heard how desirable and blessed a Change Death will bring along with it.

And let me suggest to all of you, that such a pious Resolution as this of holy *Job* shou'd be early taken up. All the days of your appointed time are little enough

nough to make due Preparation for this important Change. The time of your Preparation is appointed and determin'd by God; and he has in Wisdom conceal'd the longer or shorter Duration of it from your Notice, to quicken you to set about it betimes, and to render your wretched Delays of it the more excusable. This decisive Change will come, whether you foresee it or not: It may come when you by presuming upon longer Time carelessly deferr making any Provision for it. It may come so suddenly as to leave you neither leisure nor capacity of making ready for it. And in such a case it must needs come by a terrible and unwelcome Surprise. To such thoughtless and unprepared Sinners, Death will indeed bring a Change with it, but 'tis a sad and deplorable one; like that of the rich Sensualist, that was cloath'd in purple and fine linen, and far'd presumptuously every day, but the next News we hear of him is, that in hell he lifted up his eyes being in torment, Luke xvi. 23 v. A woful Change indeed, to pass from a Life of Luxury and Sensuality, of carnal Revelling and Jollity, to weeping, and wailing and gnashing of teeth forever; to sink from a Possibility, nay perhaps from a presumptuous and self-flattering Hope of the heavenly Felicity, into a State of hopeless and remediless Despair. And you know not how soon this may be your Case, if you willfully adjourn your needful Preparation for this awful Change.

II. We may hence learn, what it is that must fortify a good Man against the natural Fear of Death.

Death abstractedly consider'd is the greatest of natural Evils, and is therefore no proper Object of our Desire, but rather of our Aversion and Dread. Nature is wont to shrink at the near Approaches of this last Enemy, and does not yield to it without some painful Struggle and Reluctancy. But when a good Man can view it under this Notion of a Change, whereby he passes from his State of painful and hazardous Trial to a State of great and sure Reward; when he can look upon that gloomy and shady Valley as the safe Passage into the Mansions of Light; when he can extend his Prospect beyond the Grave to the Regions of Life and Immortality; when he can envisage Death in those two amiable Representations the Gospel gives, as with respect to our Souls, a going to the father, and with respect to our Bodies, a sleeping in Jesus, in the certain Hope of a glorious Resurrection: These believing Thoughts disarm Death of all its Sting and Terror, and enable him to triumph over it. And 'tis this blessed Change that is the proper Object of his Wishes and Desires; 'tis this makes him confident and willing to be absent from the body, that he may be present with his beloved Lord, and even desirous to depart, that he may be with him, which he accounts, with respect to his own Advantage and Interest, incomparably better, and more eligible, than to abide in the flesh. 'Tis this lively Faith and Hope, that makes him to take Death by the cold Hand, and bid it welcome, as the acceptable Messenger sent by his heavenly Father to call him home. All other pretended Intrepidity and Fearlessness of Death, is rather the Effect of brutal Courage, or inconsiderate Rashness. 'Tis in good Men alone the Result of sober Thoughts, and wise Consideration. Let us then endeavour to get our Minds fortify'd against the Terrors of Death, by being able to look back upon a Life spent in serious Preparation for it, with inward Peace; and to look forward into that near Eternity, we are entering into, with joyful Hope.

III. Let this minister ground of Consolation to us, under the present Loss of our pious Relations and Friends.

We indeed sensibly feel the present Loss of 'em, and shou'd not be unaffected with it. Natural Affection prompts us to lament it. And Grace is far from recommending a Stoical Insensibility upon such mournful Occasions. It allows us to sorrow, and only forbids us to sorrow as those that have no hope. 1 Thes.

iv. 13. We may grieve indeed, That we shall see their faces on earth no more; That we are bereav'd of their pleasing Converse, their prudent Counsels, their tender and affectionate Care. But it shou'd greatly alleviate that Grief, that our Loss is their unspeakable Gain, and that their Death has made so desirable and happy a Change in their State.

And this solid ground of Consolation, I am fully persuaded, we have in reference to the Death of that excellent Member of this Christian Society, that gave occasion to this Discourse.

I have had an intimate Acquaintance and Friendship with him for these forty Years past. But neither that Friendship, nor any other Consideration shall induce me to say any thing concerning him, but what I believe to be due to the Memory of the Dead, and may tend to the Instruction of the Living.

He often acknowledg'd with great Thankfulness, his having enjoy'd the early Advantage of a pious Education. And tho' he wou'd lament his own Misimprovement of it, yet it appears to have left a deep and lasting Impression on him. He had at first design'd to turn his Thoughts to another Profession, but meeting with great Discouragements, he was prevail'd on, by the Advice of his Friends, to apply himself to the Study of Physick; and having spent some considerable Time therein, under the Advantages he had both in Holland and France, he came over a young Practitioner to this City, in the Year 1684. when I first became acquainted with him. How eminent Skill he attain'd therein, as the Fruit of his great Reading, penetrating Judgment, and accurate Observations, is too well known to need my enlarging on it. His Conscience made him cautious and wary in his Prescriptions, as judging it unwarrantable to try dangerous Experiments, and (as himself express'd it) *ludere corio humano*.

He had been a Communicant before, but upon his fixing here, soon join'd himself a Member of this Christian Society. And how constant an Attendant he has been on the publick Worship of God, in all the several Branches of it; with what Gravity and Reverence he behav'd himself in it; how greatly he adorn'd his Christian Profession, by his own shining and exemplary Conversation; how serviceable he has been to the Interest of serious Religion among us, by his present Counsels, and active Zeal, and seasonable Liberality on all proper Occasions, I may safely appeal to those of you that have longest known him, as the living Witnesses of it.

I shall therefore choose only to insist on some Particulars, that either fell under my own Observation, or I have learn'd from some Papers, wherein he was for many Years us'd to record monthly his Reviews of his own Carriage towards God, and the Conduct of Divine Providence towards him.

As for the vulgar Prejudice against Men of his Profession, as if they were generally Sceptics in the Matters of Religion, it had been the greatest Injustice to charge him with it. And I wou'd hope the Charge is groundless with respect to many others. One wou'd think their Skill in Anatomy shou'd at least furnish 'em with the most effectual Preservative against any Temptation to Atheistical Principles. But as to himself in particular, I can safely affirm, (having had frequent Occasions of discoursing with him on that Head) That he was far from taking his Religion upon trust, but had made a diligent Enquiry into the solid Evidences of the Truth of the Christian Revelation. He not only firmly believ'd the Divine Original of the Holy Scriptures in general, but all the fundamental and important Articles contain'd therein; and was as able on occasion to defend 'em by solid Arguments, as many that have made the Study of Divinity their sole Profession. He had a more distinct and accurate Knowledge of the Doctrines and Precepts of Christianity, than the generality of Christians can be expected to attain to. He had

had to that End, set himself a daily Task of reading the Holy Scriptures, with the best Commentators he cou'd meet with: He wou'd frequently and freely communicate any Difficulties that occur'd to him in reading 'em, to his judicious Friends in order to gain farther Light for the Resolution of 'em; and he wou'd as freely impart some uncommon and judicious Observations of his own upon 'em. He perus'd those sacred Writings with an awful Reverence, and with great Pleasure, not as too many Libertines do, to furnish themselves with Cavils against 'em, or to turn 'em into Jest and Ridicule, but to draw Instruction from 'em for the Improvement of his Knowledge, and salutary Rules for the Conduct of his Life.

Few of those I have convers'd with, seem'd to have the extensive Interest of Christianity more at Heart. That so many Parts of this habitable Earth continue under Pagan Darknes, or the Mahometan Imposture, appear'd to him (as himself expresses it) *a shocking and astonishing Dispensation*. He abhor'd the Delusions, the Idolatry and Superstitions, but especially the enormous Tyranny, and bloody Cruelty of Rome Papal. He truly mourn'd over the Ruines of many once flourishing Reformed Churches in several Parts of Europe, and particularly in France; having seen 'em the Year before the infamous and pernicious Revocation of the *Edict of Nantz*. And this Sympathy with 'em prompted him to do all the good Offices in his Power, to the French Refugees among us, whom Persecution had driven to a voluntary Exile. He greatly lamented the dangerous Progress of Infidelity, and the general Corruption of Manners at home, and was as active in his Station as any, while the Societies for Reformation of Manners continued, to assist and encourage 'em in that excellent Service.

Tho' he had, from Principles of Conscience, fix'd his stated Communion among the Protestant Dissenters, yet he was far from confining his Charity to any one Party or Denomination of Protestants, but truly lov'd all that, in the Judgment of rational Charity, appear'd to love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. He beheld with Sorrow, the unhappy Dissentions and Animosities among those of his Persuasion in the North, and the unsuccessfulness of all healing Counsels to extinguish that Flame. For he too evidently saw that their Contentions were more owing to ungrounded Jealousies, an unyielding Temper; and the want of a Spirit of mutual Forbearance and Love, than to any real Disagreement in any important Matters of Religion. He wish'd 'em more of that *Wisdom from above, that is both pure and peaceable*.

He was much pleas'd with the Societies erected in Great-Britain, for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, and was active to procure some Contributions to that in his own Native Country, besides what he liberally bestow'd himself for their Encouragement.

And few Projects were set on Foot, among those of his Persuasion here, for pious and charitable Uses, in which he had not an Heart and an Hand, among which I may justly mention the Erection of a Charity-School in Wood-street Congregation.

Those of his Persuasion in the North of Ireland had such an Opinion of his Prudence and Zeal for the common Interest, that they sent him over with a Commission to the Prince of Orange, in the latter End of the Year 1688. to assure him of their readiness to serve him, in the Prosecution of his generous Design of rescuing these Kingdoms from Popery and Slavery. Which Trust he faithfully discharg'd. And being appointed afterwards one of the Physicians to the Army that came over, he diligently attended the Duties of his Post, till the Reduction of this Kingdom.

How assiduous he was in his Closet-Devotions appears by what himself has recorded. And he was so far from turning those secret Prayers into a customary Formality, that he strictly observ'd what Returns

were made to 'em. And tho' he makes frequent Complaints to God, of his Prayers being (as he thought) unheard and unanswer'd, under the many afflictive Trials he met with, yet he still justify'd God, condemn'd himself, express'd a reverential Subjection to the Will of God, and Resolution still to call upon him, often adopting the Words of pious Job, *Tho' he lay me, yet will I trust in him*.

But what I wou'd chiefly observe is, That he appears to have been greatly solicitous to Interest the kind Providence of God in all his Affairs. And particularly in those of his Profession; he follow'd his Advices to his indanger'd Patients with earnest Requests for the Divine Blessing in order to their Recovery. And this he did with so affectionate a Concern for 'em, that he seems too ready to misinterpret the unsuccessfulness of his Remedies, as so many Rebukes of Providence to himself, and so many Arguments of his Prayers being unheard. But when his Prescriptions prov'd effectual, he fail'd not to turn it into Matter of his thankful Acknowledgements and Praises.

Where he thought the Case of his Patients desperate, he reckon'd himself oblig'd to give 'em timely Notice of their Danger, and was not wanting, as Occasion offer'd, to assist 'em in their Preparation for their approaching Change, by suitable Advices.

He had his stated Hour wherein the Poor had free Access to him for his Advice in reference to their Maladies. And all the Fees he receiv'd from his Patients on the Lord's-days, he dedicated to pious and charitable Uses.

At his Entrance upon every new Year of his Life, he begun it by a solemn Renewal of his Covenant with God. And after the kind Providence of God had brought him into a married State, and made him the Head of a Family, he begun every Year with a renewed Dedication of himself, and all his, to the Glory and Service of God. He did the same upon every Branch God was pleas'd to add to his Family, pouring out his earnest Requests to God or their Behalf, that he wou'd accomplish his gracious Promise of being his God, and the God of his seed after him. Of this it may not be improper to mention an Instance or two.

January the 1st. —

" I begin this Year where I left off the last, with
" Psalm li. 10. I renew also my Dedication of my self,
" and all mine to God, accepting of him in Christ
" Jesus my Lord and Saviour, as my Part and Por-
" tion in Time and Eternity. O Lord, if it be
" thy Will, make this new Year a more comfortable
" one to me than these several Years by-past. I do wish
" all my Soul pour forth to the Lord this Morning
" (both with respect to my self and the Church of
" God) the Conclusion of Moses's Prayer, Psalm xc.
" from the 12. v. to the End. O Lord, hear that
" Prayer in my Mouth, which thou didst long ago
" indite to thy Servant Moses. It is very suitable for
" me, Hear me for Christ's Sake. Amen!

January the 1st.

" O Lord, my God, I begin this Year with cal-
" ling on thy Name, and by devoting my self and
" my Time to thy Service. Bless me, O Lord, and
" give me that which I ask of none but thee, even
" a New-year's Gift. O create in me a clean Heart
" and renew a right Spirit within me. Bless me and
" mine, O God, my God, and Blessings and Ho-
" nour be to thee for ever. Amen!

And as he thus dedicated his Children to God, he was no less carefull to educate 'em for him, by bringing them up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord, reminding 'em as they grew up to Years of Discretion of their Baptismal Bonds, and persuading 'em to a solemn deliberate Renewal of their Covenant with God at his holy Table.

He made conscience of maintaining the regular Worship of God in his Family, and on the Lord's-day

day in the Evening, usually spent an Hour in examining his Children and Servants, and instructing them in the Principles and Duties of the Christian Religion, being earnestly desirous that he and his house might serve the Lord.

I might have taken notice of many pious Breachings of his Soul, by way of Thankfulness for the favourable Dispensations of Divine Providence towards him and his, and of Humiliation under the many afflictive ones he met with. I shall only mention what he records in reference to a very uncomfortable Breach made in his Family.

"I ought, (saith he) to bear the Indignation of the Lord, for I am sure I have sinned against him. Tho' I know not at present why it is that God is now particularly contending with me, Lord shew it to me, and I will endeavour to reform. I am afraid not only of the Anger of my Judge, but my Father. I am bold to call God my Father, because I think I have not only clos'd the Bargain of the Gospel, whereby God not only offers to become, but is become my Father in his Son Jesus Christ; but I think also I have in some Measure the Heart of a Child towards God, for tho' I am very unworthy, and very defective, yet I think I dare say in the Presence of God, that I love the Nature, the Law, the Honour the People, and all the Interests of God. search me O Lord, and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. And, O! shew me a Token for good, for my Soul waits and longs for thy Salvation, &c.

He was a Man of great Truth and Sincerity, and greatly abhorred all Falshood and Dissimulation.

In the Friendships he contracted, he was ever ready to serve the Interest of his Friends to the utmost of his Power. And many found the Observation of the wise Man verify'd in him, that a friend in adversity is better than a Brother.

His Temperance was so known and remarkable, as in a great Measure freed him from any importunate Solicitation to exceed the Bounds he had prescribed to himself.

He gave this reason for his being punctual to the time appointed for meeting with others, that he thought it injurious to rob others of any part of their time by staying for him.

He was ready to countenance and encourage such young Candidates of the Ministry, whom he thought to be of pregnant Abilities and serious Piety.

He made it his sincere Endeavour to become a Follower of his blessed Saviour in that glorious Character given of him by one of his inspired Apostles: that he went about doing good. And in order thereto he was a careful Redeemer of his precious time.

With what Faithfulness and most tender Affection he discharg'd his Duty to his nearest Relatives, not only his own Papers, but his surviving Consort and Children can abundantly testify, and have actually shewn their just Sense of it, by their diligent attendance and affectionate care of him, during the whole course of a tedious Sickness of many Months continuance.

In that lingering Sickness, it pleas'd God to exercise his Patience with a great variety of painful Infirmities, that sometimes extorted Job's Complaint from him, that wearisome nights and days were appointed for him. But as he bore them with a reverential Subjection to the Father of Spirits, so he wou'd often particularly admonish his Children and those about him, not to entertain any dishonourable Thoughts of the Goodness of God on the Account of his afflictive Dealings with him. And he reminded them of the former Charge he had given them to fear and love and serve him.

He was during his Sickness often attended by several of my Reverend Brethren as well as my self, whose

Prayers he desir'd, not (as he said) for the continuance of his life, but a release from his present miseries, often expressing his comfortable Expectation of his future Happiness. He said, prayer was a christian's best support in a dying hour. And in the last Day of his Life, when one was desiring that God would strengthen his Faith and Patience, he reply'd, that tho' he had not at present that Prophecy (or, full Assurance) that some good men had attain'd, yet he was supported by the exercise of his faith and hope, and waited for the salvation of God. And after his dying Pangs were over, he was observed by all that stood by him to expire with a remarkable Smile in his Countenance, as if his departing Soul felt some sweet Foretast of its happy Entrance into everlasting Rest.

And he might be truly said with pious Job to wait all the days of his appointed time till his change came, for it appears by his Papers to which I have often refer'd, that even in the time of his greatest Prosperity he carried about a deep Sense of his own Frailty and Mortality, often expressing a just Contempt of this vain World, and earnest Aspiration of Soul to the solid and durable Happiness of a better.

I have mention'd these particulars, partly for the Honour of divine Grace, the amiable Fruits whereof so conspicuously appear'd in this eminent Servant of God; partly for the Confirmation of our Faith in the Christian Religion that produces so excellent Effects wherever 'tis sincerely believ'd and embrac'd; and partly for our Imitation, that we may not be slothful, but followers of them who thro' faith and patience inherit the promises of God. I wou'd only add, that we must propose the best Examples of Piety among meer Men, with due Limitation. The Apostle Paul himself exhorts his Converts to be followers of him, so far as he was of Christ. The most eminent Christians themselves have those remaining blemishes that shew them to be the Sons of Adam, as well as those brighter lineaments of the divine image that denominate and distinguish them the sons of God. Such involuntary and lamented Imperfections a gracious God overlooks and much more should we, who have so much reason to be conscious of our own. But blessed be God, there is a State before us, wherein all our sinful Imperfections will be done away, and where the righteous shall shine forth as the sun (with an unspotted Light and Purity) in the kingdom of their Father.

To this blessed State let us all with a commendable Ambition aspire. Let us firmly expect it, diligently prepare, and patiently wait for it.

Some of us are in our declining Age, and may reasonably expect that our great Change will soon come. May we so foresee it, as to hasten our Preparation for it, by improving the few days that may be yet before us to dispatch the Work and Service of our probationary State, that we may upon our departure hence receive the gracious Reward of it!

Let us not be weary of well doing, as knowing that in due season we shall reap if we faint not, Gal. vi. 9.

And as many of our dear Christian Relatives and Friends are gone before us, concerning whom we have just ground to believe, that Death has made a glorious and happy Change in their State, let this quicken us to prepare for our own. Death has indeed made a temporary and afflictive Separation between them and us. But if we be followers of them in their Faith and Patience and persevering Holiness, we shall have the comfortable Prospect of a joyful Meeting in the Kingdom of God. And as we have here convers'd with them while they dwelt with us in these earthly Tabernacles, as Heirs of the divine Promises, We shall with them make up a part of the general assembly and church of the first-born, whose names are written in heaven, and join with them in the perpetual celebration of the divine Praises. Amen.

SERMON XXVIII

Preach'd on a Day of
Fasting and Humiliation, kept by the Protestant Dissenters in Dublin, on the sad Occasion of the Death of our late Gracious
QUEEN.

The Publisher to the Reader.

HAVING heard these Sermons Preach'd at a day of Fasting and Humiliation kept among the Protestant Dissenters in Dublin on the occasion of the Death of our late Excellent Queen, I have with much difficulty and importunity prevail'd with their Authors to let me have Copies of them for the Press, because I judge the Publication of them may tend to promote more of that good understanding and hearty affection among Protestants, which has long been the earnest desire of all good men. And this end I hope they will be serviceable to attain, by removing some of those common prejudices against Dissenters, which have so much contributed to alienate the minds of their Fellow-Protestants from them. For by these Discourses the Reader may easily observe,

1. That their Charity is so far from being confin'd to their own Party, that where-ever they see the Image of God (consisting in the Essentials of Faith and Holiness) stamp'd on others, no lesser Differences signify any thing to diminish their affectionate Esteem for them. And as that Image shone with the brightest rays in the late Queen (who, we all know, liv'd and dy'd in the Communion of the Establish'd Church) so it possess the Dissenters not only with perfect Charity towards her, but with that profound Esteem and Veneration for her Piety which these Discourses so largely express.
2. That Dissenters come not behind their Fellow-Subjects for loyal Affection to their Sovereigns. For as their Principles, in reference to the subjection due to Magistrates, are exactly the same with those of the Establish'd Church (as will evidently appear to any that compare their Confession of Faith with the 39 Articles on this head,) so tho' other Protestants derive greater advantages from the present Government, yet none express a more grateful sense of the favour of an indulgent Prince, or a more dutiful Affection to him than they do. And this is so universal, that as none of them fail'd to contribute their utmost towards this Revolution, so none of them have been yet convicted of any sticking or plotting against the Government. 'Tis true indeed, they are not fond of that Passive Obedience without any reserve or legal Limitation, which some have (tho' very unreasonably) make the characteristick of the Establish'd Church; For those that did so, us'd it only to serve a Turn, and as quickly renounc'd it, when it run contrary to their interest. But Queen Elizabeth's assistance to the Scot's and Hollander's, and King Charles the First's to the French as well as this Revolution plainly demonstrates, that the body of that Church are not for that Doctrine of the Asses (as the Earl of Warrington calls it) in it's boundless latitude, tho' all good Protestants and good Subjects are for Passive Obedience in it's due and limited sense.

And to add no more.

3. That the Dissenters are so far from being prejudic'd against Monarchy (when cast into the excellent mould of our wise Constitution) as if it were inconsistent with the advancement of the true Interest of Religion, that they never expect to see the Church Crown'd with greater Prosperity and glory than when Kings are her Nursing Fathers, and Queens her Nursing Mothers, and they know not of any more remarkable accomplishment of that Prediction, than what they have seen since this happy Revolution.

And tho' they think not Monarchy to be Jure Divino exclusive of other Forms of Government; yet they think since the Entail of the Royal Scepter on the Family of David, there was no King more expressly design'd by Heaven, or set over a people by the Most High, than his present Majesty is.

Since then the Establish'd Church and Dissenters fear the same God, honour the same King, and contribute to the support of the same Government, why may they not live in mutual Peace and Love? Nay, why may they not, tho' some Differences about modes of Worship, and Church Government, oblige them to retain distinct Assemblies, yet regard each other as belonging to the same Common-Wealth of Israel? And that these Discourses may be useful to promote such a truly Charitable and Christian temper, is my earnest wish, and only aim in their Publication.

D. Cumyng.

2 Chron. Ch. xxxv. The last Clause of the 24th, and the first of the 25th Verse.

Ver. 24. And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.

25. And Jeremiah lamented for Josiah.



Evil Custom has taught us to pay a grateful Respect to our deceased Princes by some external Marks of our sorrow for their Death. And sure those Subjects were very unworthy of so eminent a Blessing as all good Princes are, who do not resent their Death as a public Loss, and who pay no Tribute of their Sighs and Tears at their mournful Funerals. But yet there are some of them, whose Life has been so endear'd to their People by the great benefits they have deriv'd from their excellent Government, and the greater they have been rais'd to the hopes of; and whose death have been so embitter'd by frustrating those joyful hopes, and presenting a long train of dismal consequences to their view, that it may justly be expected the sorrows of their afflicted Subjects shou'd at such a time transcend the common bounds, and be as extraordinary as the sad occasion of them.

Such an eminently beloved Prince was this in my Text, whose unexpected Death attended with several aggravating Circumstances of it, did overflow his whole Kingdom with an unusual Torrent of grief. For 'tis observable, that tho' many pious and just Princes had sway'd the Jewish Scepter before, and doubtless their People had not been wanting to express their just esteem for them, by lamenting their decease, yet we read no more of them, than that they died, and were buried in the Sepulchres of their Fathers. And yet who can imagine, that so Religious and Valiant a King as David, so wise and prosperous a one as Solomon, nay, so illustrious Reformers as Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah shou'd not have many tears of their affectionate Subjects shed over their Graves. And yet we find this Remark only made on the death of good Josiah, that when he was brought wounded from the Field to Jerusalem, and died there, All Judah and Jerusalem mourn'd for him. And to recommend the Example the more, Jeremiah himself (that faithful Prophet) is here mention'd as the chief Mourner, and seems to have born the greatest share of the public grief at the sorrowful Solemnity of laying him in the Sepulchre of his Fathers. There must sure then be something singular in this excellent Prince himself, or in the circumstances of his death, that occasion'd so remarkable a sorrow, of which there is so special notice taken here by the inspired Historian, nay, which we find elsewhere to have become proverbial, to express the greatest Transports of public grief. (For hereto 'tis probable those expressions allude; And in that day shall be great Mourning in Jerusalem, as the Mourning of Hadadrimmon in the Valley of Megiddon, The former name importing, as some Expositors judge, some small Town or Village, near the Valley of Megiddon, where this fatal Battle was fought.) Nay, to so extraordinary a height was their sorrow carried, that 'twas not confin'd to that time or Age, but transmitted to future Years by a public Ordinance; As you read in the words following the Text:

Now if we look back on the short History of this Prince's Reign, we may observe many Circumstances that concurr'd to justify and heighten their grief. If we consider his Qualities, we shall find he was not inferior to any of his Predecessors in those excellent ones that might endear him to his people, by rendering his Government a public Blessing to them. If we ob-

serve the time of his death, 'twas in the flower of his Age, and when he was intent upon the prosecution of great designs for the publick good, and particularly that of advancing the happy Reformation of Religion he had begun. If we look forward to the consequences of his death, those also appear most dismal; his Death being the sad presage of all those Calamities hastning on that people, which the Prophets had foretold, and which were only suspended and delay'd during his Life.

No wonder then that his Death fill'd them with so general Consternation, and dissolv'd them into a flood of Tears, when so many circumstances conspir'd to give it so doleful and so terrible an Aspect upon them.

From the words then we may deduce this subject of our present sorrowful meditations.

The Death of Excellent and Religious Princes, when they are cut off in the prime of their Age, and in the height of their publick usefulness, is a just ground for deep and general lamentation.

Now the Death of such Excellent and Religious Princes, when attended with these two aggravating Circumstances, will appear to be a just ground of deep and general lamentation. If we either consider it merely as a public Calamity and Affliction, Or if we consider it as a mark of the just displeasure of God against our Sins, and often a presage of destructive vengeance.

It will appear to be a just ground for deep and general lamentation, if we consider it merely as a public Calamity and Loss.

For public Afflictions not only justify, but call for public Sorrow. Grace is not intended to extinguish, but to moderate and govern our natural Passions. So that to be insensible of public Evils, and unaffected with 'em, is so far from being a Vertue, that 'tis rather a sottish Stupidity, than true Patience and Fortitude. The soft and tender disposition of an affectionate Nehemiah, (1 Neh. v. 3, 4.) is more becoming a Christian, than the unnatural indolence of a churlish Stoic.

Now the Death of Excellent and Religious Princes, is a public Calamity and Affliction, both considered abstractedly in itself, and much more, as aggravated by these Circumstances I have mention'd.

First, 'Tis so, consider'd abstractedly in it self, and that both in respect of the Civil and the Religious Interests of a People.

1. In respect of their Civil Interests.

For what can more effectually contribute to the temporal Prosperity of a People, than the excellent Endowments of their Rulers. A large and clear Judgment to discern, and a public Spirit to pursue the real Interests of their People as their own, inflexible Integrity in the administration of public Justice, tempered with Goodness and Clemency, unwearied Diligence in their application to public Affairs, and a tender affectionate Care for the welfare of their Subjects. These are such god-like Qualities, as render Princes the amiable Images of that blessed Deity whose Vice-gerents they are, and consequently the Darlings and Delight of their happy Kingdoms. And indeed when under the prudent Conduct of wise Princes, the public Interests of their Kingdoms prosper and flourish, and they are secur'd from foreign Invasions, and domestic Broils: When under the Shadow of

their Authority and Protection, their People dwell safely, every man under his own Vine and his Fig-tree, none making them afraid; (1 Kings iv. v. 25.) When thro' their Zeal for Justice, and accurate care for the equal distribution of it, Judgment runs down (to every part of their Dominions) as Water, and Righteousness as a mighty stream, Amos v. v. 24. Its Course being so impartial, as neither to be interrupted or perverted by Bribes, or by Favour. When their Ears are open to all just Grievances, and the Cause of the Widows and Fatherless is as favourably heard, and their Wrongs as speedily and effectually redress'd, as those of persons of the highest Rank and Quality. When instead of making their Government an unsupportable Yoke to their Subjects by grievous and illegal Taxes and Impositions, 'tis rather their study to render it easy by a tender care of their Property and Liberties, and by taking off such heavy Burdens from em. When their Lives are thus entirely sacrific'd to the good of their People, in unwearied toils and care for their Security and Welfare; When 'tis their chief Ambition to be like the blessed God, the Protectors of oppressed Innocence, and publick Benefactors to mankind; Then happy is the People that is in such a case, (Ps. cxliv. v. 5.) And such a Prince is so extraordinary a Blessing, that Nature itself shou'd prompt all his Subjects to lament his death as an extreme Affliction, even as the loss of a common Parent. And those never deserv'd the beneficial Advantages of the happy Government of such Princes, whose Hearts are no way touch'd with the deep Wound their Death gives to the publick Interest of a Nation, which on the account thereof may justly say, *the Crown is fallen from our Head*, (Lam. v. 16.)

And this consideration, no doubt, had some influence on the sorrow mention'd in my Text for the death of King Josiah; For we read in the v. following the Text, of his Acts, and of his Goodness (or his Kindnesses, as your Margin justly reads it.)

He was not destitute of any of those excellent Qualities I have mention'd: Sure he must have had a large and capacious Mind, that could begin and carry on with such Success, so intricate and difficult a Work as that of Reformation, when his Years were so green, and before he had any Advantage of Age and Experience to ripen his Judgment, (See 2 Chron. xxxiv. v. 34.) And the extraordinary Diligence wherewith he followed it, shews his intense application to publick Affairs, (see ver. 6, 7.) His exact Justice is doubtless included in that general character, (2 Chron. xxxiv. v. 2.) Of his generous and bountiful Disposition, there is a noble Instance recorded, (2 Chron. xxxv. v. 7.) And of that tender Love he bore to his People (one of the most amiable Qualities of a good Prince) we have two remarkable Proofs; the one in the 19th and 27th ver. of the 34th Ch. where the perusal of those Threatnings the Law of God had denounc'd against that sinful Nation, so affected his Heart, that he rent his clothes, and the prospect of their Danger drew a flood of Tears from his Eyes. The other we have in this Chapter, and it was such a proof of his Affection to his People, as cost both them and him very dear. For his eager concern to prevent the Danger which he thought threaten'd his Kingdom from the passage of the Egyptian Army thro' some parts of it, to encounter the Assyrian, engag'd him in that hasty and imprudent Attempt to oppose 'em, that bereav'd his undeserving People of a Life he was on this occasion too forward and prodigal to expose for their preservation.

And no wonder these Royal Vertues so endear'd this Excellent King to his People, when they had so long shed their happy influence upon 'em in the course of his just and gracious Government; so that his Death seem'd to 'em like the taking the very Breath from their Nostrils, like the rending away that Soul that had so long enliven'd and cherish'd their Political Body. To allude to the Expression us'd, Lam. iv. 20.

But the Death of such Princes is also a publick Calamity and Loss to a People.

2. In respect of their Religious Interests.

And as those are infinitely more valuable than any other, so the fatal Consequences which the Death of pious Princes is usually attended with as to them, gives a peculiar Accent to our Sorrows on the account of it. Eminent Piety is so great a Rarity in the Courts of Princes, which abound with so numerous Temptations to Vice; and 'tis so unusual and difficult a thing to be Great and Good, that where the Graces of the Spirit of God are found in a happy Conjunction with the Glories of an Earthly Crown, such a Prince is indeed the Phoenix, the Honour and the Blessing of the Age he lives in; so that the Loss of him is almost irreparable. When a Nation is favour'd with such a Prince as this, Who, to all other Vertues adds this of ardent Zeal for the glory of God, and the Salvation of Souls: Who is himself a diligent Student of his holy Word, and draws from thence the best Maxims of true Policy, and heavenly Wisdom: Who considers himself as the Minister of God, whose Government should be conform'd to the excellent Ends of his: Who resolutely employs his Authority to maintain the uncorrupted Purity of Religion in its Doctrine, Worship, and Sacred Discipline, and to promote the strict observance of the Divine Laws: Who understands the true Interest of practical Christianity and Holiness, and bends his main Force and Study to encourage and strengthen that: Who applies his wise and healing Counsels to establish a necessary Unity in the undoubted Essentials of Faith and Holiness, and to promote a happy Concord in Affection, where Mens different apprehensions about lesser things will not admit of a strict Uniformity in doubtful Opinions and Practices: Who protects and cherishes with a paternal favour and care, all faithful laborious Pastors and their Flocks, and is solicitous to diffuse the light of divine Knowledge into the darkest corners of his Dominions, by thrusting out Labourers into those necessitous parts of the Harvest: Who wields the Sword of Justice as a Terror to all Evil-doers, and that with so undaunted Zeal and Courage as to make Iniquity stop its Mouth, and lay some effectual restraint on open and insolent Wickedness: And to add no more, Whose blameless Life sets before his People an amiable Pattern of that holy Religion his Power is employ'd to defend, and draws as many by its attractive Influence to be the cordial Votaries of Piety, as his Authority awes into an external profession of it: I say, when a Nation is favour'd from Heaven with such a Prince as this, How invaluable a Mercy is his Life and Reign, and how great and glorious Effects may be expected from it! How solid support will the precious Interest of Religion derive from his Power, how abundant Encouragement from his Bounty and Favour, and how charming a Lustre from his bright Example! So that his Subjects must have lost all sense of its value, if they do not sympathize with it in the Loss of so powerful a Protector and Friend: If we have any concern for the glory of God, it must needs pierce our Hearts when so Eminent Instruments of it are remov'd. If we have the genuine Affections of the living Members of the Church, we shall weep with her, when she is bereav'd of such Kings or Queens, as have been such tender Nursing-Fathers or Nursing-Mothers to her.

And this was the very Case of the People in my Text; For tho' Josiah was adorn'd with all other Princely Vertues, yet as smaller precious Stones almost disappear when they stand near some large and sparkling Jewel, so are these other excellent Qualities almost obscur'd in the short History of his Reign, by the Lustre of his signal Piety. And this indeed shone in him with the most bright and conspicuous Rays, and makes up the main part of his Character.

His Piety was remarkable for the Earliness of it in an Age commonly addicted to Folly and Vanity, and estrang'd from all serious Thoughts and Counsels. For 'tis recorded to his singular Honour, that in the 8th Year of his Reign, (and in the 16th of his Age) while he was yet young, he began to seek the God of David his Father, 2 Chron. xxxiv. v. 3.) Nay, this Circumstance does the more commend and set it off, that he herein happily declin'd from the Steps of his wicked Father and Grandfather, who had both revolted from the true Religion; but he adher'd to the God of Israel whom they had forsaken, and became as illustrious for restoring, as they had made themselves infamous by abandoning his true Worship. And so universal and accurate was his Piety, that he is said to have done that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, without declining to the right hand or the left, 2 Chr. xxxiv. 2. And so admirably fervent was his Zeal in it, that we are told, Like to him was no King before him, that turn'd to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, neither arose any after him like unto him, 2 Kings xxiii. 25. And we need no other Proof hereof than the wonderful Effects of his holy Zeal recorded in this and the foregoing Chapter. He began first with the extirpation of that wretched Baalitic Idolatry that had so universally polluted the Land, of which he took the exactest care possible, to destroy all the Reliques and Monuments that cou'd be found. And to fix in the Minds of the People the utmost detestation of 'em, he defil'd those Altars with burning on 'em the Bones of the Idolatrous Priests, that had been worse defil'd with their cursed Sacrifices before, (2 Chron. xxxiv. from the 3d. to the 8th v.) Having finish'd that, he then set upon the reparation of the House of God, a great part whereof had been ruined in the former Reigns. (See from v. 8. to v. 14.) And when Hilkiah the Priest found the Book of the Law of God, (of which, it seems, the Copy had long lain in Obscurity, and Rust, and no wonder then the People were sunk into general Ignorance of it) he not only heard it read with devout Attention, but upon the perusal of it, bitterly lamented the woful Violation of it, which the People had long been guilty of, caus'd it to be publicly read to 'em, and by the influence of his Authority and Example, induc'd 'em to enter into a solemn Covenant for the strict observation of it. See 2 Chron. xxxiv Chap. from v. 14. to the end.) And particularly he begins with restoring that grand Solemnity of their Religion, the Paschal Feast, to the strictness of its first Institution, so punctually reducing its observance to what the Law enjoyn'd, that 'tis said, There had not been such a Passover kept in Israel since the days of Samuel the Prophet, (2 Chron. xxv. v. 18.) Nor was his Zeal only level'd against the Corruptions of divine Worship, but was equally bent against Immorality and Wickedness. For we read of his breaking down the houses of the Sodomites, and his putting away the Workers with familiar Spirits, and the Wizzards, (2 Kings xxiii. v. 7. 24.) No wonder then that his People shou'd pay so profound a Veneration to so admirably pious a Prince as this. For tho' the generality of 'em seem only to have disssembled in their external compliance with the Reformation he advanc'd, (as we may infer from the sequel of the History) yet they had so much secret Reverence for Religion left, that his wonderful Zeal in it carry'd too powerful Charms to be resisted; and it made so deep Impression on the Minds of all that were truly good, that they look'd on his Fall as a Death-wound to that Religion his Life had restor'd, and lamented over it, as ready to be buried under the Ruines of so noble a Patron of it. Bnt

Secondly, The Death of excellent and religious Princes is much more a publick Calamity and Affliction, when attended with these two aggravating Circumstances, viz. When they are cut off in the flower

of their age, and in the prosecution of their glorious Designs for the publick Good.

And it was these two particular Circumstances that gave so sharp an Edge to this Affliction in the Text, and made it pierce so deep into the Hearts of the People. Good Josiah was now only in the 39th Year of his age, tho' in the 31st of his Reign. According to the ordinary course of Nature, he might have sway'd the Jewish Scepter as many Years yet to come: And since he carried on the blessed Work of Reformation to so great a height in so short a time, to what a degree of Perfection might he have brought it, had he reach'd to the same age as many of his Predecessors had done before him? That solemn Celebration of the Passover is the last Act, of his, recorded before this surprizing account of his Death. So that he not only fell in the prime of his Years, but was carried off the Stage, when acting the most desirable and useful part upon it. And no wonder then that this Stroke should appear so terrible, which so quickly bereav'd 'em of a Life and Reign, on the long continuance whereof they had rais'd so great Expectations. And therefore the learned A. Bp. Usher supposes that Passage in the Lamentations to point to this violent Death of Josiah, ch. iv. v. 20.) The Breath of our Nostrils, the Lord's anointed was taken in their pits, of whom we said, under his Shadow we shall live among the Heathen.

And indeed the Death of such pious Princes may justly be then reckon'd a more sensible and wounding Loss, when 'tis sudden and unexpected. When they die in a Good old Age, and full of days, their People are in some measure prepar'd for such a Stroke by the Warnings that their natural Infirmities give others as well as themselves of it. And there is just Occasion to be thankful that their happy Government has been continued so long, as well as to regret that they must resign it at last, and that we cannot in them protract the time of Life beyond the usual extent and date of it. But when their Constitution seems to be firm, their Health in its vigour, and their reasonable Powers in their vivacity, when their Minds are fill'd with those noble Projects for the Glory of God, the advancement of true Religion, and the welfare of their Subjects, which are the result of Experience, and of wise deliberate Counsels; and when through their entire Ascendant over the Affections of their People, they are posses'd of all Advantages for the accomplishment of such glorious Designs: And to add no more, when we are promising to ourselves the happy Product and fruits of all this; if now an unforeseen Accident forcibly snatch and tear them from us, if a sudden Distemper in a few Hours or Days hurry 'em from the Throne to the Grave; if now Death, that grim Pursuant be sent with a Commission to arrest and carry 'em off from the very Scene of publick action, if now their breath go forth, and they return to the earth, and their thoughts in one day perish, (Ps. cxlvi. v. 4.) What Terror and Consternation, what Fear and Grief may this justly possess their People with, when they see all their passionate Wishes cross'd, all their mighty Hopes blasted, and those probable Instruments of publick Good so suddenly, and irrecoverably ravish'd from 'em! How dismal a Prospect of things may this deservedly give 'em! Which leads me to the second general Head.

II. The Death of excellent and religious Princes, when attended with these aggravating Circumstances, is much more a just ground of deep and general Lamentation, consider'd, As a mark of God's displeasure against the sins of their People, and often a presage of destructive Vengeance.

I. The Death of such Princes when they are thus cut off in the flower of their Age, and in the height of their publick usefulness, is always a mark of God's just displeasure against the sins of their People.

So important Events as these doubtless come under the accurate disposal of his Sovereign Providence. If

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the least Sparrow fall not to the ground without our Heavenly Father, Matth. x. 29. Much less is the Fall of the Greatest and Best of men, in respect of his purpose and conduct, a contingent and uncertain Event. *If the hairs of every good man's head be numbred, v. 30.* Much more are the Lives of Good Princes under his observant Eye and Care. 'Tis asserted by the inspired Penman concerning every particular person, *That their days are determin'd, that the number of their months is with God, that he has appointed their bounds that they cannot pass, Job xiv. 5.* And sure 'tis no less applicable to those Glorious Instruments of his Providence, on whose death so great Revolutions and Turns of publick Affairs usually depend. He by whom Kings Reign, and Princes decree Justice, has in his Eternal Counsels fix'd the Epocha and Period, when their Government shall begin and end, and that in a subserviency to the designs of his own Wisdom, and usually for the illustration of his Justice or Mercy towards their People. When therefore a righteous God brings on a sinful people so surprizing a Calamity as the unexpected death of an eminently pious Prince, snatch'd away in the prime of his years, and in the prosecution of great designs for the publick good, this does by no means look like a meer act of Sovereignty and Dominion; It carry's the plain characters of Vindictive Justice engraven on it. Such a people may reasonably conclude, 'tis some National Offences that have provok'd him to deprive them of so inestimable a National Blessing; And when the Crown is thus (unexpectedly fallen from their heads, 'Tis a very obvious and just Reflection on so terrible a stroke, *Wo unto us that we have sinned, Lam v. 16.* For a gracious God has too indulgent an affection to his Church, to take away by an immature Death her tender Nourishers and Guardians, where her undutiful carriage has not provok'd him to an act of so great severity, and even extorted so awful a Judgment from him. He seems to be deeply offended with a degenerate age, when those are long suffer'd to Reign and prosper, who are Monsters of Wickedness, and the common Plague and Scourge of the Earth; while those excellent Princes, who were publick Patterns of Piety, are but just shewn to the World, and then withdrawn from it as unworthy of them.

2. Nay, sometimes such a stroke as this is not only an indication of God's displeasure in General, But a sad presage of destructive Vengeance it self. As when it comes on a people at the heels of many lesser Monitory Judgments in vain us'd to recover them to serious Repentance, and seems to make way for the full Execution of that Destructive Indignation which their incurable obstinacy in grievous and National sins has been long ripening and preparing them for.

And this was the very case of the People in my Text, and this very Consideration seems to have been the chief spring of their extraordinary sorrow.

This People had for several successive Reigns been guilty of great backslidings from God. They had frequently revolted to the gross Idolatry of Baal. They had sunk into woful Ignorance of the Law of God, and greatly depriv'd his Instituted Worship. And a general Torrent of Immoralities had broke loose among them. God had rais'd up among them a succession of several extraordinary Prophets, who describ'd their guilt to them in the most lively colours, upbraided them with their great ingratitude and obstinacy, and on the score of it denounc'd his desolating Judgments upon them, and particularly that of the *Babylonish Captivity*. Inasmuch that when good Josiah (who from the Threatnings contain'd in the Book of the Law, plainly foresaw the great wrath of God ready to be pour'd down upon them) sent to consult Huldah the Prophetess; He has indeed a favourable message return'd relating to himself, *That he shou'd be gather'd to his Fathers in peace, and shou'd not live to be a sorrowful Spectator of those tremendous Judgments, or sharer in them.* But for the Nations, His Anger was now kindled into too violent a flame to be quench'd, His Patience wou'd no longer forbear to avenge the crimes of their Fore-fathers on their incorri-

gible Posterity. (For indeed the compliance of the generality with Josiah's Reformation was but feign'd, as appears by their quickly relapsing in the Reign of his Successor.) And tho' the Life of this pious Prince shou'd a while suspend, yet it shou'd not prevent the ruining vengeance that was threatned, see *2 Chron. xxxiv. 24, 25, 26.*

No wonder then that his sudden death shou'd affect them in so extraordinary a manner, when it seem'd to cut off from them all the hope that remain'd of preventing the utter destruction denounc'd against them, and so left them now open and unguarded to the stroke of inexorable Justice. Nay, no wonder we read so particularly of Jeremiah lamenting for Josiah; Well might he now wish, *That his Head were waters, and his Eyes a fountain of tears, Jer. ix. 1.* When the death of this Godly Prince did present all the miseries of a long Captivity to his view, and gave him the doleful prospect of it's near and inevitable approach on that guilty people. And therefore some suppose (and not improbably) that he therein a prophetick rapture of grief penn'd the *Lamentations*, in which those woful calamities are so pathetically describ'd, as already inflicted, which were so near a coming.

And sure there is great reason to lament the death of pious Princes, when it carries so sad a prognostick of the vengeance hastning on a wicked people, for whose final ruin a just God is preparing, by beginning to remove the only Instruments likely to prevent it. And therefore such dying Princes may bespeak their people in the language of Christ to the Daughters of Jerusalem, *Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children, on whom the dismal times are coming, wherein it shall be said, Blessed are the barren, even the Wombs that never bare, and the Paps that never gave suck, Luke 23. 28, 29.*

It remains now that we apply what has been said to our own case, And

1. Let us hence consider, *How just occasion the unexpected death of our late Religious Queen gives us for deep and general Lamentation.*

2. Let us learn to turn our sorrow into the right Channel, and improve it to the best purposes.

I. Let us here consider, *how just occasion the unexpected death of our late Religious Queen gives us for deep and general Lamentation.*

To mourn for her, is a Tribute we owe to her memory, if we only consider'd the excellent Qualities she was endu'd with, which represent our loss of her as invaluable great. I shall not indeed attempt to give her character, but leave that to such as had a nearer view, and have a fitter pencil to draw the portraiture of her excellent Mind. And therefore shall only suggest, That besides all those amiable Vertues that render'd her the glory of her Sex, there were many becoming her eminent Station, that shone with so bright a light, as could not fail to attract the eyes and admiration of all her Subjects; such as that rare Humility and Condescension with which Majesty and Greatness was so sweetly temper'd in her; Her extraordinary Clemency and Goodness; Her tender affectionate Concern for her People; Her prudent and steady Conduct, and her unshaken Resolution in the administration of publick Affairs, when left in her hands at such a juncture, wherein we were threatned with eminent dangers both from open Enemies abroad, and discontented ones at home; But above all, Her great and exemplary Piety. As to which I shall only add, That as the Piety of Josiah was the more remarkable, because he was the Son of a Father who had disown'd the true Religion; and as it was the singular commendation of Abiiah the Son of Jeroboam, that in him was found some good thing towards the Lord God of Israel in that house, *1 Kings xiv. 13.* So 'tis the honour of our late Queen, (in which her Royal Sister has also happily follow'd her Example) that she firmly adher'd to that Reformed Religion which her Father had abandon'd, (whose perversion to the Romish Idolatry put him on those unhappy Measures which had like to have been pernicious to the whole Protestant

testant Interest in Europe; but by a just over-ruling Providence prov'd fatal to his own.) And indeed when we consider the signal Hand of God in that glorious Revolution, the Crown seems to have been plac'd on her Head by Heaven, as the Reward of her Piety. Nor was she one of those superficial Votaries that Interest often proselytes to the external profession of the true Religion. Her sincere and ardent Zeal for it appear'd with the most convincing Evidence, not only in the constancy of her publick and private Devotions, but in that purity of an unstained Conversation that is its most genuine Fruit, and its truest Glory. Nor do we want abundant proof of her pious concern to revive the Practice of it in a degenerate Age; besides the great Designs of that kind, which we are assur'd (from the Testimony of the late Archbishop of Canterbury, who frequently convers'd with her on that Subject) she had form'd in her Mind. So that I think we may justly say, that since the Death of our former English Josiah, Edward the 6th, none has ever since sat on the Throne, that has given more evident Marks of a sincere love of Piety and exemplary Practice of it.

And that which renders her Death the more justly lamented, is the suddenness and surprize of it. It was the effect of a violent Dilemper that forcibly ravish'd her, as it were, out of the very Hearts of her affectionate Subjects, when we were so far from apprehending the danger of so dismal a Loss, that we were flattering our selves with great expectations of a lasting Settlement under her happy Reign. Nay, she seems snatch'd away at a Juncture, that renders the greatness of our Loss the most sensible to us, when the share of publick Action abroad still devolv'd upon our Sovereign, made her Presence and Conduct at home the most necessary to us.

Shall then the sudden Removal of so eminent a publick Blessing leave us stupid and unaffected, as if we had no sense of so deep a Calamity? For such an eminent publick Blessing true Piety renders those Crowned Heads in whom 'tis found, and in whom 'tis like to be so vastly communicative and diffusive a Good. For in them it always derives a more attractive Lustre from their eminent Character and Dignity, to recommend it to others; like a rich Diamond set to the greatest advantage, or an exquisite Picture plac'd in the best light to charm the Beholder's Eyes. In them it appears that true Piety is so far from being a mean Quality, only suitable to these of an inferior Rank, that on the contrary, nothing can more truly enoble the Mind, and inspire it with great Thoughts and glorious Designs; so that wherever 'tis found in the greatest of Earthly Potentates, 'tis always the brightest Jewel in their Crowns, and transmits their Name and Memory to succeeding Ages with the most lasting Honour. Their charming Example has a mighty tendency to recover Religion to its just Repute and Veneration among Men, and draws others to an imitation by an insensible and sweet, but almost irresistible force. Nay, in them, Religion is back'd with that Power, that may contribute much, not only to its support and defence, but to the enlargement and extension of its Interest in the World. For tho' the internal and vital Power of Religion in the Hearts of its sincere Professors, can bear up against the most violent Storms of Persecution, like those excellent Plants that retain their verdure during the Severities of the sharpest Winter, yet its external Interest is like to grow more, it will most effectually spread its Branches, and propagate itself by a large accession of Converts, under the warm auspicious Rays of Civil Power, when 'tis furnish'd with all the Advantages and Encouragements that the Favour and Bounty of pious Princes can give it.

And shall we not then lament that untimely Death, that has bereav'd the Age of so noble a Pattern, Religion of so cordial a Patron and Friend, the Church-

of God of so tender a Nourisher, and these three Kingdoms of a Princess whose Interest in the Hearts of all sincere Protestants, contributed so much to this great and happy Revolution? Shall not her Death be as much the universal Grief, as her Life and her Reign has been the universal Joy of her People?

But sure the Consideration of her immature Death will more powerfully affect and pierce our Hearts, if we regard it, as an awful mark of the displeasure of God; and as carrying some suspicious presages of destructive Vengeance.

We shou'd be very stupid indeed, if we did not resent the unexpected Death of so pious a Princess as a severe Judgment. We have no reason to doubt that 'tis our heinous Sins have provok'd a righteous God to take away from these three Kingdoms the desire of their Eyes. If such Kings and Queens as are Nursing Fathers, and Nursing Mothers to God's Israel, be promis'd as the most signal Blessing, Isa. xlix. ver. 23.) The untimely removal of them must needs be as remarkable a Curse and Punishment. It would argue little better than a profane Contempt of the Justice of God, shou'd we overlook so awful Effects of it. If we shou'd not feel when he smites us with so terrible a Stroke, as looks not like the gentle rebuke of a Friend, but the deadly Wound of an incensed Enemy.

For there seems to be something in this surprizing Calamity that has a more dreadful Aspect upon us than ordinary Judgments have. To clear this, it will be necessary to take some short review of our Carriage towards the Great God, and the remarkable Steps of his Providence towards us. If we look back as far as the two preceding Reigns, It is a sad, but just and obvious Reflection that has been made by all sober Persons, that the former of them was attended with the most violent and general Inundation of Atheism and Infidelity, Leudness and Immorality that perhaps was ever known in these Nations since the Light of the reformed Religion shone in them. The Contagion having infected the Court, soon spread itself with an irresistible Force to the remotest parts of these Kingdoms.

And as for those inconsiderable and unhappy Differences that continue amongst us, notwithstanding our professing the same reformed Religion, so far were any moderate and healing Methods from being pursued in order to the composing them, that, on the contrary, they were greatly widen'd, partly by those narrow Terms of ministerial Conformity that have excluded some thousands of judicious and pious Labourers from the publick Vineyard, and partly by those additional Laws that let loose the Reins to a Spirit of Revenge and Persecution. And this was attended with fatal Consequences to the Interest of Religion itself, not only by diverting the Zeal of good Men from the Substantials of it to less important Opinions and Practices, but especially by giving the profaner part of the Age a specious Opportunity of venting their natural Enmity against practical Piety itself, as cloth'd with those odious Nick-names they had fastned upon it. Nor did our Popish Enemies fail to improve these fatal Advantages given them to strengthen their Interest by weakning and dividing our's. On the contrary, they manag'd them so effectually by their secret but powerful influence on an unhappy Prince, that the vigorous attempts of two successive Parliaments (inspir'd with the true Zeal of Englishmen and Protestants) to stem the Tide of Popery, serv'd only to expose our noblest Patriots to the malice and artifices of that Party, and to facilitate the Ascent of a Prince of that Religion to the Throne. In his Reign, the swift advances of arbitrary Power (swell'd with an easy Triumph over a feeble opposition) did so effectually prepare the way for the re-establishment of the Romish Religion, that the Protestant Interest seem'd in the judgment of all it's considerate and serious Professors to stand on the very brink of ruine. And in this Kingdom, it was actually

ally so far consign'd into the hands of our Popish Adversaries, that tho' we are now rescued from them, we yet groan under the desolating ruins we were then involv'd in, and carry the broad Scars of those deep Wounds visible upon us. But the tender bowels of divine pity did at that time move towards a guilty People, and surpriz'd us with an amazing deliverance when we thought our destruction inevitable. Our present King, and late Queen were honour'd by Heaven to be the happy Instruments of saving three perishing Kingdoms from impending Ruin. And how sure it might justly have been expected that the terrible Judgments to which our Sins had expos'd us, shou'd effectually awaken us to serious Repentance; or at least that such miracles of Mercy shou'd powerfully oblige and constrain us to it. But alas, how far so suitable and so extraordinary methods of divine Providence have been from attaining this excellent end, is too obvious to our sad Reflections. Never sure were so awful Judgments so wretchedly slighted, nor so eminent Favours requited with so vile ingratitude. Our Fears seem'd to lay some present restraint upon us; But we quickly return'd to our Sins as soon as our dangers were over, as if our deliverance had only embolden'd us to offend with greater hope of impunity. The wonderful mercy of God in shaking the heavy Yoke of our Enemies from off our necks, seem'd to have no other effect upon us, then to encourage us the more boldly to cast off the Bonds of his own just and gracious Government. 'Tis true indeed, some endeavours were us'd to check that Torrent of open Profaneness and Debauchery that had again broke out so violently among us. Some Proclamations and Orders to that end were issued from the Throne, and some few inferior Magistrates shew'd some Zeal to second the Pious Intentions of our Rulers; but the Disease was too strong for the Remedy, and all this prov'd only a feeble uneffectual attempt, like the opposing a weak Digue to the impetuous violence of a boisterous Sea. 'Tis true also, we owe the seasonable repeal of many Laws, whose severity had long tended to alienate the affections of Protestants from each other, to the better temper, and the moderate Councils that this happy Revolution brought along with it; but the Proposals tending to lay the ground-work of a desirable Accommodation have been hitherto unsuccessful. Now the great God (whose just expectations from us have been thus frustrated) has not fail'd to make us sensible of his Displeasure, not only in the continuing expences of a tedious War, but in so frequently giving our Enemies fatal advantages to insult and triumph over us, and reducing our Affairs into a very hazardous posture. But alas, how stupid have the generality been under all these visible indications of divine anger, sinning on with a curs'd impudence in the face of all these monitory Judgments, and turning a deaf ear to all the Remonstrances made to them of their guilt and their danger!

And what Method is the great God now taking with us? He has been hitherto lopping off our branches, he is now laying the Ax of his Judgments to the Root of the Tree, and has already cut down one of those Props on which our confidence of publick Safety was born up. He has remov'd one of those glorious Instruments he had made use of to effect our Deliverance. And now he lets us see upon how slender a Thred our most valuable Interests either as Men or Christians seem to depend, and how easily he can sink us again into those Confusions and Miseries out of which we have escap'd. He now seems to tell us loudly, that he is repenting of all the good he has done unto us, and if some visible and speedy Repentance on our part prevent not, we may expect to see that glorious Scene of Providence revers'd, which our Ingratitude and obstinate Wickedness has rendered us so unworthy of. For such an Event as this looks not like the correction of a Father, but the vengeance of a Judge: Not like a merciful Warning, but rather like the opening the Sluice to let

in a Flood of more desolating Miseries than yet beheld. And shall we not tremble at the Voice of the terrible Rod of God, who so loudly claims to us, That he will not be any longer brav'd by our bold Impieties: But if we will repent of them, neither will he repent of, but execute all the Evil that's determin'd upon us. Reason then have we to lament the Death of religious Princess, when she seems (like good *Yolande* to her Grave in Peace, that her Eyes may not see the terrible effects of Divine Wrath coming upon an impenitent Generation! Nay, how particularly have God's faithful Messengers to lament, who have so great ground to apprehend this Stroke as the beginning of those destructive Judgments they hitherto in vain warn'd a secure and incorrigible People to obviate by a general Repentance?

But this leads me to the other Use.

II. Let us turn our sorrow into the right Channel, and improve it to the best purposes.

And here,

1. Let our Grief for this Affliction be turn'd into sorrow for our sins, that have thus kindled the Wrath of God against us.

And O that Rivers of Tears might run down our eyes, when we reflect on those publick Provocations that have thus arm'd the Vengeance of the Lord against us! And is it not a dismal Consideration, that no endearing Obligations of Mercy can bind a disingenuous and unthankful; Nay, that monitory Judgments awaken a secure and stupid People shou'd it not pierce our Hearts to think, that the open Marks of practical Atheism and contempt of God, I mean our hellish Oaths and Curses, shou'd so commonly heard among a People, who have lately beheld such astonishing Effects of his Power and Mercy in our Preservation, as if we thought our deliver'd to do all these Abominations? That the Luxury and Sensuality, Intemperance and Ungovernedness, Pride and Vanity, &c. shou'd still defile the Lands that lately expos'd them to the Danger of a deluge of Miseries? That Magistrates and Ministers have been no more zealous to oppose this Spread of Irreligion and Licentiousness, the one by the coercive power of the Sword, the other by the faithful Reproofs of the Word? That what has been done hitherto prov'd so fruitless and ineffectual? That there seems to be so little Hope left of any general effectual Reformation? That all farther Attempts towards it seem to be given over as vain and impracticable? If we were resolv'd to sin on and leave it to the vengeance of a just God will go on to punish? O what reason have we to read and tremble at the awful Passage (*Amos iv. v, 12.*) The great God had visited this People with three successive Judgments, But they wou'd not return to him; And therefore he sends thee this dreadful Challenge, *Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel, and because I will do thus unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel. q. d. Expect now a Punishment that shall be as unparallel'd and unexampled as your incurable obstinacy has been; And therefore prepare now to encounter the vengeance of an incensed God.*

2. Let us be excited to deprecate the farther effects of divine Anger with the greatest earnestness,

And, O! what cause have we to humble our knees under the mighty hand of God that's so visibly stretch'd out against us! To own and vindicate his righteousness in the severest of his Judgments, to accept the punishment of our Iniquities, *being dumb and silent because he has done it! Ps. 39. 9.* What occasion have we now to beg more importunately than ever, that he wou'd spare an offending people, and stop the course of his vindictive Justice, and in the midst of Judgment remember mercy! How fervent shou'd our supplications be for the preservation of that valuable life that's yet left to us, the continuance whereof we yet to give us a reprieve and respite from those destructive

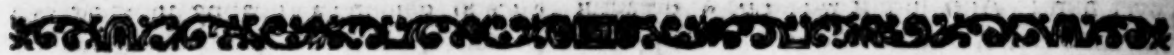
destructive Calamities we fear! How shou'd we (as David in the behalf of his People) stand between the destroying Angel and our dread Sovereign, that the vengeance may proceed no farther! And especially when he's about to expose his Life to new Hazards in the publick Cause? What reason have we to tremble and fear lest our sins shou'd furnish us with such another subject of more bitter mourning than that in my Text! What need have we then to hold up by earnest Prayer, the inviolable Shield of Divine Protection over him! And sure it would be a dreadful Symptom upon us, if the fervour of our Supplications shou'd abate when our Dangers encrease; If while the Hopes of our Enemies are rais'd, the Hands of Prayer shou'd hang down? If when the avenging Arm of God is again lifted up, there should be none among us that stir up themselves to take hold of him, in order to the making Peace, (Isa. lxiv. v. 7.)

3. Let us be excited to serious Repentance in order to the success of our Prayers for averting the farther Effects of divine displeasure.

And O that our King and our Magistrates may imitate the excellent Pattern in my Text! That they would read the Word of God, believe the terrible Threatnings of it, rend their Clothes, and weep over the Nations Sins and their own, from a holy dread of that terrible Wrath that yet hangs over us! (2 Chron. xxxiv. v. 18, 19, &c.) O that they would by their own Example and Authority engage their People to renew their Covenant with an offended God, in order to the regaining his forfeited Favour! (v. 29, 30, 31. &c.) O that they would at length resolve to lay out their Power with Courage and Zeal, to promote the Observance, and restrain the open violation of his holy Laws, as persuaded that nothing short of a national Reformation can prevent our Ruin! O that God's faithful Ministers would sound their Trumpet

yet louder, to awaken (if possible) a sleepy Generation to a sense of their aggravated Guilt, and their extreme Danger, before they be surpriz'd with remediless Vengeance. May every one of us, at least, resolve to reform our own Hearts and Lives, nay, to reform our Families, and (as far as our Interest and Power can reach) to promote the Reformation of others. For who can tell if God will turn, and repent and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not? Jonah iii. v. 9. And should this awful Judgment produce so genuine and happy an effect as a general repentance, how easily can the great God make up that extreme Loss we have sustain'd, by blessing that honourable Instrument he has yet spar'd to us with more eminent Success in his great Designs for the publick good. He that has so wonderfully preserv'd that precious Life with a vigilant and tender care, when so oft within an Inch of Destruction, seems to have reserv'd it for some glorious Purposes: And how easily can he prolong it till he has accomplish'd by him those gracious ones, viz. The Deliverance of his oppressed Churches abroad, and the happy settlement of those at home, which he seem'd once to have entertain'd in his Heart, and which nothing but our Impenitency retards the execution of. In a Word, our publick Safety or Danger entirely depends on the restored Favour, or continued Displeasure of the great Sovereign of the World; If he frown upon us, in vain do we promise our selves Security from the greatest and best of Princes, whose breath is in their Nostrils, and who return to their Dust; If he smile upon us, we may despise the threats of the most formidable Enemies, For why should those be afraid of a man that shall die, or of the son of man that shall be as grass, who have the eternal God for their Refuge and Defence. For happy is the People whose God is the Lord, (Ps. cxliv. v. 15.





SOME
REMARKABLE PASSAGES
IN THE HOLY
LIFE and DEATH
Of the late REVEREND

Mr. Edmund Trench;

Most of them drawn out of his own DIARY.

Being dead, yet speaketh, Heb. xi. 4.





T O

Sir Thomas Roberts, Bt.

A N D

Mr. THOMAS TRENCH, Merchant.



I did not need any long Dispute with me to whom I should present this Account of the Reverend Mr. *Trench's* Life, drawn from his own Breviate of it; when I consider'd not only your Relation to him, (the one by Marriage, the other by Blood;) but that Extraordinary peculiar Affection to you both, which his Diary so frequently abounds with large Expressions of. How great a share had you in his Kind and sollicitous Thoughts! And how constantly were any Events that concern'd your welfare, the matter of his *Prayers* or *Praises* in his holy Retirements! I have indeed designedly left out those passages, wherein he declares his judgment of you, tho' some of them were otherwise very fit to be inserted as expressive of the low Opinion he had of himself. For tho' there could be no suspicion of Flattery in 'em on the part of the Dead; yet I know the most deserved Praises are dangerous to the living. And I am too desirous of your imitating your excellent *Brother* in that *Humility* (which was one of the most amiable Excellencies that adorn'd his life,) to do any thing that might be prejudicial to your improvement in that grace, which (as he would often observe) should be the distinguishing Badge of our Relation to our Blessed Master. That you may still live to answer more fully the Character he gives, and the great Hopes that he had conceiv'd of you; That the stock of Prayers which he daily laid up in Heaven, may descend in yet richer Returns on your self and Families. That you may still follow him more, in Copying out that admirable Description of our Saviour's Life, *Acts* x. 38. *That he went about doing good*: That you may improve the Considerable Advantages you are entrusted with for that *Blessed purpose*; That thereby you may encrease the Numbers of so bright *Examples of Goodness* in a degenerate Age, and become the *singular Ornaments of your Christian Profession* in it, is the hearty Prayer of

your affectionate humble Servant

P R E F A C E

T O T H E

R E A D E R,

" **T**IS not without the Contrivance of exquisite Wisdom, that the Pen-men of the holy Scripture
 " have recorded so many observable Passages, of the Lives and Death of several Eminent Saints
 " For, besides, there is something in the Historical Part of the Bible, so grateful to our natu-
 " ral Curiosity, as more easily engages our Attention and Delight in the perusal of it: We
 " should be too ready to think these sacred Oracles deliver to us an impracticable Idea of Piety and Hol-
 " ness, if we did not behold the accurate Impression of it: Doctrine and Precepts instamp'd on the Temper
 " and Actions of those that embrac'd 'em. But those amiable living Patterns of Religion, sensibly reproach
 " our Defects as inexcusable, encourage and quicken our Endeavours, and inflame us with a holy Emula-
 " tion to equal or out-do them. There is, indeed one peculiar Advantage in that Relation of the Lives
 " of good Men, which the holy Scriptures contain; that we are sure that their Actions are represented with
 " all plainness and simplicity: The curious Pieces drawn by those inspir'd Painters, own none of that
 " native Beauty and Lustre they appear with, to the arbitrary Favour of their Pencils, which as faith-
 " fully presents to our view, those Defects and Spots, which shew'd 'em to be the Children of Adam,
 " as those fairer Lineaments and Strokes of the Divine Image, which evidenc'd them to be the Sons of God.
 " But next to the Memoirs of holy Men recorded there, there are none in which we can have greater as-
 " surance of Impartiality, or may expect to find, not only their Actions, but even the secret Springs and
 " Motives of them more faithfully laid open, than in those penn'd by themselves, especially when those that
 " keep Diaries of their own Lives, are not only Persons of solid Judgment, but of that remarkable Hu-
 " mility and Integrity that may command Belief from all that know them: On both these Accounts this
 " ensuing Breviate of the Reverend Mr. *Trench's* Life, does recommend itself; 'twas penn'd, by him, in the
 " times he set apart for the strictest Self-reflections. I need say nothing to persuade any that had the Hap-
 " piness to converse with him, how exactly his own Motto was engraven on his Words as well as Actions;
 " in Simplicity and godly Sincerity. And even for those that knew him not, I am confident there are so
 " lively Characters of Sincerity that appear in these Papers themselves, as will abundantly satisfy all that
 " read them; that in writing them, he sate to himself, and drew a naked and undissembled Portraiture
 " of his own Soul. And though I doubt not he intended them only for his own Use, or his near Relations;
 " yet they are too precious Remains of that excellent Soul, and too capable of being publicly useful to
 " the Interest of Religion, to be so confin'd. The Truth of Christianity has been prov'd by the clearest
 " Arguments that the Nature of the Subject can require; and vindicated against the most plausible Obje-
 " ctions of the numerous Infidels, or (as they would now be call'd) Deists of this Age. But methinks the
 " Lives of such eminent Professors of it, are a considerable Addition to the Strength of those Arguments,
 " and carry with them more sensible Evidence of its Truth. That Revelation must sure needs be from God,
 " which moulds those that embrace it into so God-like a Temper, and raises 'em to so glorious a Resem-
 " blance and Imitation of the Divine Life. And here those that own the Principles of Christianity, may, in
 " this Glass, easily learn to distinguish betwixt its vital Power, and that dispirited dead Image of it so com-
 " mon in the World. It evidently appears from this Account of his Life, that those two essential Branches
 " of our holy Religion, Love to God, (venting itself in a constant and devout intercourse with him through
 " a Mediator) and Love to Man, (inflam'd by the peculiar Motives the Gospel presents, and expressing it
 " self in the most affectionate and zealous Endeavours, to do them the greatest and most lasting Good
 " were the very Constitution and Frame of his renewed Nature, and the daily Pulse and Breath of his Soul.
 " O! with what attractive Glory would practical Christianity shine, and render the Christian Church a fair
 " Model of the heavenly Society, were such Instances of its admirable sanctifying Influence, as common as
 " those Votaries it has gain'd from Custom and Interest? But I would, especially, propose his Life as a
 " Copy for those of his own Profession to write after: They may from him learn, that those only are fit
 " to undertake so awful a Trust, as to watch over the Souls of others, who are diligently careful to ob-
 " serve and regulate their own. In him there was a rare mixture of the Graces that should adorn both the
 " Contemplative and Active part of a Minister's Life. And few have I known to whom that Character
 " of Ministers (which he us'd to draw from their being call'd Angels) did more exactly agree: For his
 " Time was truly divided betwixt beholding the Face of his Father in Heaven, and ministering to the Heirs
 " of Salvation on Earth. There was no Colour for taxing him with those Faults that are of late become
 " the common Reproach of too many of the Clergy, Ambition and Avarice. He was so far from aspiring
 " to great Preferments, that he would thankfully have accepted of the meanest Cure, wherein he might
 " have had the Opportunity of doing good to Souls in a publick Station, which his strong Inclinations to
 " Peace, made him (perhaps too earnestly) desirous of.
 " Indeed if ever Humility inclin'd to a culpable excess, it was in him; for to that we must impute it,
 " that so eminent a Light was for so many Years confin'd to a dark Corner, which was fitter to shed its
 " diffusive Beams in a fair larger Orb. And so far was he from prostituting his Profession to serve a se-
 " cular Interest, that having enough of his own to subsist on, he never received one Farthing on the score
 " of

of his unwearied Labours; but on the contrary, laid out a considerable Sum yearly in good Books, and other ways of Charity among the People he preach'd to; and contributed out of his own Purse, to such young Ministers as had but a scanty and discouraging Allowance. I confess, all are not capable of imitating him herein; but, methinks, such Examples should upbraid those Clergymen, that not only seek Ecclesiastical Dignities, with the same mean and sordid Arts that others do secular ones; but so often by Pluralities enrich themselves, at no less cost, than the neglected, betrayed Souls of the People. (An Abuse too foul for any specious Colours to hide the Deformity of it; and so gross, that it could not escape the Complaints of the pious Council of *Trent*. And 'tis a Shame that our Convocation have never done any thing to reform it.) He, on the contrary, was as liberal of his Purse as of his Pains, to promote the Interest of his Blessed Master, which was far dearer to him than any thing that he could call his own. And indeed the admirable Success which both his, and the worthy Mr. *Brand's* Ministry, (who was for some Years his Neighbour in those parts of *Kent*) met with, as endear'd by their large and generous Charity, has often made me wish, that more pious Gentlemen would devote their Sons to that sacred Function, who are able to give them such Estates, as shall free 'em from the Necessity of dependence on their People, and capacitate them to recommend their Instructions by their Alms. As our Saviour's Miracles of Mercy in healing Men's diseased Bodies, prepar'd them to receive him as the compassionate Physician of Souls: So when his Ministers are capable to relieve the Necessities of others, their Charity insinuates into the Hearts of their People, that affectionate Veneration for them, as give all their holy Counsels the greater Authority and Efficacy. There is but one thing more I shall take notice of concerning him, and that is, his great Temper and Moderation, in reference to those modern Controversies that have made so great a noise in the Reformed Churches; and I do it the rather, because the Reader may wonder to find little or no mention of them in the following Breviate of his Life. But though few perhaps did more thoroughly understand them yet none that ever I convers'd with, spake more sparingly of them. He look'd on that violent Zeal which the most express about them, as a feverish preternatural Heat that only prey'd on the vital Fervour of practical Religion. But when he declar'd his Judgment to his Friends that desir'd it, he profess'd his concurrence with such as endeavour'd to reconcile the contending Parties, by avoiding the harsh Extreams of either; and particularly his great Esteem of the pacifick Writings of that eminent Light of his Age, Mr. *Baxter*, to whom he own'd himself more indebted for solid and useful Knowledge, than any other whatsoever, tho' he had read the most celebrated of the *French*, as well as *English* Divines, and had a particular value for the Writings of *Monsieur Daille*, and Dr. *Isaac Barrow*: And now I shall no longer detain the Reader from the perusal of his Life, than to desire he may read it with a serious Design to transcribe into his own, whatever he shall find in it worthy of his Imitation.

Edmund Trench. March 10. 1684.

My Father's MOTTO and my own.

2 Cor. 1. 12. *In Simplicity and Godly Sincerity.*

Phil. i. 21. *To me to live is Christ, and to Die is Gain.*

Phil. iii. 8. *I count all things but dung, that I may win Christ.*

Rarius de dogmatibus Christus differuit, saepius, immo vero ubique & semper de vivendi sinceritate.

*Vivere bis, vita posse priore frui,
Ampliat aetatis spatium sibi vir bonus.*

THE Title of *Angels* sometimes given to Ministers, should mind them of imitating those Glorious Spirits, as far as may consist with the Frailties of Flesh and Blood, dividing their Time betwixt beholding the Face of their Father in Heaven, and Ministering to the Heirs of Salvation.

About 15 Years ago I wrote some passages of my Life, and have since occasionally added more. Present Afflictions on what I am, and what I have been: My Papers afford me some help, and may be more useful laid together; therefore I design the sum of what I have written, and further shall occur fit to be remembered. The ends I aim at (as I formerly noted them) are, The Glory of God's free Grace in and through Jesus Christ my dearest Lord and Saviour, the sole Foundation of my Hope and Comfort!

The Shaming and Humbling my self, that have so often, and do so heinously offend so good a God, and so merciful a Redeemer.

The prevention of future Relapses by the remembrances of God's great Favours so undeservedly multiplied.

The promoting perseverance and growth in all manner of holy Conversation and Godliness, by the Meditation of my past Follies, and the review of my Thoughts, and Resolves about my own Duty and Happiness in times of great Afflictions, and the approaches of Death to others, and seemingly to my self also.

The furthering of Hope, and Peace, and Comfort, and joy in such Seasons as they may be most necessary and useful.

All through the Assistance of the Spirit of Grace, which I most humbly and earnestly implore.
Some things of those from whom I descended, for my Imitation and Encouragement.

My Grand-Father was Edmund Trench, a Younger Son of John, a Norfolk Gentleman, Converted about

about the 16th Year of his Age to the Faithful Service of God, by the Labours of Mr. *Furnace*, noted for Piety and Painfulness in those parts. By his godly humble Conversation when his Master *Grocer* in *Norwich* fail'd, he was recommended to two Brothers whose Name was *Cock*, of chief Rank in that City, who intrusted him with the management of their Trade in Stuffs at *London*. He abundantly answer'd their Expectation, and at length became their Brother, by Marrying the youngest of the three Daughters of Mr. *Mowre*, a Pious and prudent Citizen of *Norwich*, and a Partner in the considerable Trade they drove, (the two Elder being their Wives before) Many Years he enjoy'd a large Portion of the Divine Blessing, thriving in his outward Estate, lov'd and honour'd by his Fellow Servants, rejoycing in divers hopeful Children, and above all, walking before God in Health and Holiness with great Delight in his Service, and great assurance of his Favour. But as he would say, he found at last, *He was not in Heaven*. He was exercised with many Losses, some very great, in his Estate, Sicknes and Death in himself and nearest Relations, Doubts and Fears about his Eternal Condition; and which was most grievous to him, horrid and blasphemous Thoughts and Suggestions. All these with Melancholy were more troublesome in his Old Age. Yet he persisted in his holy Course, exercising himself continually to keep a Conscience void of Offence towards God, and towards Men; constant in Secret, Private and Publick Prayer, reading the holy Scriptures by himself, Catechizing his Children and Servants, examining them about, and reading for their use the publick Labours of his Minister, most just and equitable in his Trade and all his Dealings, and eminently Charitable in helping others according to their several Wants. And God greatly bless'd his Example and Instructions for the Conversion and Confirmation of some Souls, especially those nearest to him. At length, in a good Old Age, 83 Years and a half, he rested from all his Labours, and entred the invisible World of Glorious Spirits, *June 7. 1658*. His good Name liv'd long after, as is not yet dead among such as had to do with, or heard of him. My Grand-Mother surviv'd almost 11 Years, a constant Professor of Religion, and, I hope, sincere Practiser also: She follow'd, *March 16. 1668-9*, almost 90 Years Old.

Of their Children, four only attain'd to Years of Discretion, whereof two Daughters were married to *Caldwell Farrington*, and *Thomas Bewley*, of *London*, Merchants; both Happy before I was born, as was likewise the younger Son, dying about Eighteen.

Edmund the Eldest was born *July 8. 1608*. always towardly, addicted to Seriousness, Study, and Piety in those Years inclined to Play and Folly. He answer'd his Parents faithfulness in his Education with early Goodness, owing (as far as I could understand) a *new Birth* to those from whom he received a *Natural*. In the eighteenth Year of his Age, from the Care of his School-Master Mr. *Augur*, he was sent to *Sidney College* in *Cambridge*, and committed to Mr. *Dugard*, a Pious, Learned, and Painful Tutor. He grew in Grace and Learning, happily escaping many Temptations, and frustrating the Designs of some Superiors, who would have debauch'd a *Puritan* as they call'd him; tho' he was still sufficiently conformable to the establish'd Ecclesiastical Orders. He perform'd his Exercises and proceeded Batchelour and Master with Credit, and obtain'd an Excellent Report from his Tutor, and from the Master of the College, Dr. *Ward*. While he liv'd under them he was long exercis'd with a troublesome Distemper, which many unpleasant Means did not remove. How humbly and Patiently he did bear, and how excellently he improv'd so tedious an Affliction, I learnt to my Comfort and Encouragement from many of his Pious Letters among my Grand-

Father's Papers. They were sure a lively Picture of his Soul, which knew not how to Dissemble at any time, much less when so sensibly under the hand of the Heart-searching God. They flow'd with holy Resignation to his Will, quiet Submission to his directing Hand, earnest desires to understand his Mind, to grow still more humble and penitent, and dead to this World, and better prepar'd for another. They abounded with thankful Expressions for their care, cost and pains, and especially to God for supporting under and making better by the troublesome returns of his Disease, not without admirable Expressions of Hope and Joy in the Love of God in *Jesus Christ*, witnessed by his Spirit, by such Temper and Deportment for many Years before he found Relief, he was doubtless better qualify'd to do the Will of God in his following Health, and to suffer with such wonderful Patience, Submission, and Rejoycing, the grievous complication of Diseases that was the fore-runner of his Death. A while after he was Master of Arts, on due Consideration, Advice and Prayers, he studied Physick some time at *Paris*, and took the Degree of Doctor at *Bourges*. When returned to *England*, he married *Mary Eldest Daughter of Samuel Middlemore*, Merchant of *London*, (a very Pious, Charitable Man in his Life, which he clos'd with a bountiful Gift to the Company of *Cloth-Workers*, for the Annual Relief of twenty Poor in Coals, Cloth, &c.) he dying after his Wife, when his Children were Young, committed them to Sir *John Wollaston*, and Mr. *Thomas Burnel*: The Daughters were happy in the faithfulness of the latter, and in their Religious Education under his Wife their Pious Aunt. The Elder, *Mary*, was married to my Father, *August 14. 1639*. She then past the middle of her seventeenth (Born *Jan. 24. 1622*) he entred on his thirty second Year. The Younger, *Sarah*, was afterwards the Wife of Sincere and humble Dr. *Roger Drake*.

My Father was faithful according to his enlarged Duty as a Husband, and after as a Father to myself, and five other Sons (besides one still born) and three Daughters, careful to our Souls and Bodies, sparing for nothing needful in Temporals, or Spirituall, exceeding loving and tender, and yet never that I could see or hear mourning for the Death of any, tho' he left but three behind. Having done his Duty where he was sufficiently sollicitous, he cheerfully acquiesc'd in what pleased God. In his Education he was much help'd by his true Yoke-fellow our good Mother, who though she had hard Travel to bring some of us, (particularly my self) into this World, yet Travell'd much more to fit us for a better. Through her assistance he follow'd his Practice with more Leisure and Comfort. His Employment was considerable, and which he more rejoyc'd in, his Success. He was eminent for faithfulness to all that had recourse to him, frequently visiting, deliberately considering their Cases, watchfully observing the turns of their Distempers, and accordingly with great care and judgment varying his Prescriptions. His tender care of their Souls greatly inclin'd him to Discourse with and advise his Patients a spiritual Physician, but he was often forc'd to forbear in dangerous Cases, because he found by experience the Sick were apt to judge themselves past help when he spake to them of another World, their Spirits sinking, and Remedies proving less effectual. In all his Practice he was generously free from Covetousness, not using any Trick to encrease it, nor unworthily seeking to, or humbling his Patients, weary of numerous though profitable Visits, and industriously speeding their Recovery, prescribing no more than he judg'd needful, and frequently refusing Fees, which even his Patients thought he might as well have taken. He was still the same sincere plain-hearted Man, free and open without Deceits and Tricks in his calling and all other Affairs. And sure he was the more blessed of God; and

wise considering he was no Politician, apt to believe the best, and trust as if others were as far from dissembling as himself, he could not have liv'd and brought up his Children as he did, nor, his Losses consider'd, left such a Competence to his Widow, and them. He constantly persever'd in those good ways into which he was entred by his Parents, and when they grew old and very infirm, he made it more his business *ἀντιπαρεῖν* and that even when gray Hairs grew upon himself, and his own Distempers increas'd the Difficulty of complying with others. About fifty he was troubled with the Stone, from which God's Blessing on his own endeavours reliev'd him. But then about eight Years before his Death, he fell into an incurable Jaundise, accompanied for a while with a *Scirrhus* in his Liver, frequent troublesome Itchings, Aguish shiverings of long Continuance, little and disturbed Sleep, violent Fits of the Colick, great Appetite with ill Digestion, and other very troublesome Symptoms. He bare all with exemplary Patience and Contentment, never that we could perceive repining at such severe Dispensations, nor ever praying for their removal, nor yielding, though importun'd, to have one Day set apart to seek on his behalf, when we wish'd him a good Night in his Fits, he would reply, It would be good because it pleas'd God. He would rarely let any stay a Night with him, affirming; *He was not alone, but the Father was with him.* And with the Father he sometimes enjoy'd more Heavenly Communion, which yet was not constant and long as his Peace and Hope were; they hardly admitted any Interruption, but he generally long'd to be dissolv'd and to be with his God and Saviour; and speak thereof often with Delight.

In the Year 1665, when the Plague began to rage (the Weekly Account amounting to about three thousand, the importunity of Friends drew him with us to Dr. Drake's in Burnham, where yee he was more in Reading, Meditation and Prayer. He express'd a still greater Sense of the Love of God in *Christ*, and of his Truth and Goodness in afflicting him. He profess'd his Soul more establish'd thereby, with a powerful Conviction of all Creatures Vanity, and rais'd to more vigorous acting of a realizing Faith in holy Heavenly Meditations, That the sweetness and profit thereof in his Retirements were such, that he fear'd the Return of his usual Employments, and should be afraid of losing his wearisome affliction, without great Assurance that Health should be as spiritually advantageous as Sickness; professing his constant Judgment that the least Progress in Grace and Holiness was greater matter of Joy, than the greatest Affliction of Sorrow. He judg'd it very unbecoming a Christian for *Sense*, so far to prevail against *Reason* and *Faith*, as to raise any considerable Averseness from of that Cup which his Sovereign Lord and tender Father most wisely prepar'd for his good. Accordingly he desir'd his Friends to shew their Love in praying, for a progressive sanctify'd Improvement of his Sufferings, and not for their Removal, and wish'd them comfortably to believe, there was no such harm in afflictions as we are apt to Imagine. The Fire of *London* removed him first to an House near *Stepney*, and soon after to another in *Crouched Friars*, where he heartfully expected his Deliverance by Death. 1669. He grew confident of its approach. Aug. 14, being his Wedding-day, he rejoyc'd with some invited Friends, affirming it the last he should live on Earth. October, He spake of his sensible Decays, as Tokens of his near desir'd Rest. About the middle of December he caus'd his Will to be new drawn, ordering particularly that Clause to be insert'd, *That he recommended his Soul, on good Evidence, into the Hands of God*, adding, That he left us much less than the World imagin'd, but he hop'd God's Blessing with having never wrong'd any Man of a Penny. A day after, (14th. before he died) when I was dis-

courfing of his Dissolution, he said, *He could appeal to God through his infinite Goodness, that since his youth, he had walk'd before him with an upright Heart, never wasting his Conscience with any gross Sin, that he comfortably believ'd his Regeneration by the holy Spirit, and saving Interest in his dearest Saviour; and had accordingly enjoy'd a constant Tranquility of Mind, not without some short, and seldom more ravishing joy.* He then renew'd his oft-repeated Charge of loving and serving God, being dutiful to our Mother, and helpful to our little Sister, which yet, he said, he did not doubt of; and to our great Comfort, *Blessed myself and Brother, blessing God also for us.* Perceiving his Distempers and sore Mouth to encrease, he took a solemn leave of my Mother, telling her, with joy, *he was going to his God, and her God, and that e're long, they should meet to part no more.* After which, he bid us not to expect to hear much from him, but believe his Mind still the same. Accordingly he persisted, bearing patiently his grievous Pains, yet saying little, tho' enough to signify his uninterrupted Hope and Joy, till Friday 31. of December 1669. when after some Imperfect Words, but two Hours before, of *Death*, and *Christ*, and *Pardon*, his Spirit return'd to his heavenly Father, and instead of a New-Year on Earth, entred a glorious Eternity in Heaven. He lives still in the honourable Remembrance of such as knew him; never mentioned, to my Knowledge, with reproach; oft with *Eulogies* of his *Piety*, *Sincerity*, *Ability*, and *Faithfulness*, as a Man, a Friend, and a Physician, Some (I doubt bad themselves) commended his Goodness, acknowledging, the common (though I think unjust) reproach of his Calling cou'd not be fasten'd on him.

O may I by the Help, and to the Glory of Divine Grace, imitate such excellent Examples, and not degenerate from them, but serve God with all my Might, according to my Father's Symbol, *In Simplicity, and Godly Sincerity.* My Grandfather was a Pattern of Humility and Meekness, and yet of Resolution when there was Cause; of great Charitableness in Word and Deed; especially to his Relations, who had great Sums from him, which yet his Children did not want. He likewise was an eminent Instance, that Doubts and Fears, and horrid Suggestions may infect the truly, yea, the excellently Good; and that great Losses and Crosses in Estate and Kindred may consist with God's especial Favour. My Father set me a bright Example of Integrity and Plain-heartedness, of Content and Rejoycing under heavy Afflictions, of affectionate Faithfulness in all his Relations, and of conscientious Diligence in his particular Calling; and he was an encouraging Instance of a Divine Blessing on such as seek first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and cast their Care on him in Well-doing; his Estate having been preserv'd and increas'd, thro' great Hazard and Losses, without worldly Policy. Both led and engag'd to Earliness and Constancy in God's Service, secret, private and publick; to a faithful discharge of every Office of Love to all they had to do with, to a sober, righteous, and godly Life, in hope of a future satisfying everlasting Felicity.

From such I entred on my earthly Pilgrimage, Octob. 6. 1643. about Five in the Evening, after my Mother had been Three Days in painful Travail. I was born with a great Wound in my Head, suppos'd by a Blow of a great bes'd Bible, as my Mother came out of Church: That was heal'd, and afterwards many Diseases and Hurts in my Childhood; both Thigh-bones dislocated together; afterwards an Arm broken, well-set, no Harm remaining. During my tender Years, I was my Parent's immediate Care in *London* and *Hackney*, from whom, and my good Grandfather (whose Diversion I often was) I wanted not Instruction, Example and Encouragement; and so far I seem'd to answer

answer their Endeavours, that they delighted much in me. But I well remember, and thou, O Lord; much more, abundance of Wickedness I was guilty of, Disobedience to Parents, indulging my Appetites to Excess, taking or stealing what was not allow'd; quarrelling, especially with my next Brother, *Samuel*, whom I should have born with, considering his woful Affliction by the *King's Evil*; Pride in Apparel, or what Abilities and Acquirements I had; Envy, mispence of Time in *Romances*, *Plays*, *idle Stories*, &c. too much Play and Lying. All aggravated by so many and great Mercies and Means, such singular Love and Light, that I have often thought my Sins more hainous than theirs that I have seen going to Execution. They were never so engag'd, never enjoy'd such Helps as I. *Have Mercy upon me, O Lord, according to thy great Goodness, and blot out my Transgressions, for my Saviour's sake.*

Towards the End of my Fifteenth Year, I was sent to *Cambridge* with Mr. *Samuel Jacomb*, and by him plac'd in *Queen's Colledge*, under the Tuition of Mr. *Andrew Paschall*: There I got the Love and good Report of my Tutor and others, but was far from deserving it: I made a shift to do the *Exercise* requir'd, but wofully neglected my Studies; sadly addicted to *Tennis*, *Cards*, and other expensive forbidden Sports, to reading *Romances*, *Plays*, and smutty Poets; and at length, more entangled with bad Company, especially in the Abience of my studious and loving Chamber-fellow, (afterwards Sir *J. K.* an eminent Lawyer of the *Inner-Temple*, taken off when rising to Riches and Honour) by them I was drawn once again to Gluttony and Drunkenness, Swearing and Cursing, and at last to making (as they call'd it) indeed to stealing of *Handkerchiefs*, *Knives*, *Books*, or what else we cou'd lay our Hands on. This was a common shameless Practice, and suffering thereby from others, I thought I might right my self. It was God's Goodness that I went no farther, having been tempted to go with them to naughty Women, which (my Inclination consider'd) I wonder I never did. Blessed be God, who still restrain'd me, 'till my Chamber-fellow leaving the College, and some other Obstacles being happily remov'd, when I was most in Danger; my Father, who suspected nothing, but thought too well of me, thought fit, for other Reasons, I should remove to *Oxford*; thither I went towards the End of 1660. to *Magdalen-Hall*: Before that Year expired, I proceeded *Bachelor*, which, to Doctor's Sons (at least the Eldest) was then permitted at Twelve Year's standing: Performing the usual *Exercise* on that Occasion, I was unexpectedly engag'd among some who were too excessively debauch'd for me. They stirr'd in me some Abhorrence, as bad as I was, and drove me to better Acquaintance; and God cast me on such, as were not only of a better Temper, but really Pious, for whom I think my Parent's Tincture, had in some measure, prepar'd me. I thought such Company would please them, and (prais'd be God) it soon grew Pleasant to my self also. By their Converse especially, and reading good Books, (I also heard the best Ministers) those good Principles were awaken'd, which my Parent's had sown, and they soon became vigorously active for *Repentance* and *fruitful Obedience*. I reflected on my Sins with Shame and Sorrow; I oit confess'd and bewail'd them before God with bitter Anguish and Detestation: They soon turn'd my Laughing into Weeping, my usual Cheerfulness into a very sorrowful Melancholly, and fill'd me with Self-abhorrence, Dread and Horror. In such a Condition I continued, though mercifully supported, a long Time, getting by degrees more Gleams of Light, and Intervals of Hope and Comfort. The Sin that was most troublesome to undo, was my taking, as before, several Things from others;

I thought Restitution my Duty, though I thought I might take, as I did, to right my self. St. *Austin's* Saying, *Non remittitur peccatum, nisi restituatur ablatum*, struck me like Thunder, and I had no Rest till I parted with all, even with what I had taken from them that had wrong'd me. But Shame and Inconsideration betray'd me to a Course, that afterward encreased my Trouble; I wrote to one too guilty himself, and that had made me worse; he profess'd *Repentance*, and readiness to assist and imitate me in Restitution: And upon his repeated Engagements, I sent him all I could think of, not my own in *Kind* or *Value*, and then was quiet as to that Matter. [How his Friends served him, you will hear anon.] After almost Two Years abode at *Oxford*, I left that *University* also, being sent, about 7 Months after, to *Leyden*, by my good Father, who was willing I should study *Physick*. Before I went, I understood his Unfaithfulness whom I had trusted to right those I had wronged; and left with a better Man, more than I could think due to any, except those my self righted.

In *Holland* I enjoy'd good Company, good Ministry, and my more intimate Converse with *P. C.* useful: We only were together in a *Dutch Papist's* House, where he laboured exceedingly under great Terrors and Sorrows for Sin; having many bitter Pangs and long Agonies, with plenty of Tears and Cries; Which the *Papist* taking notice of, charged our Religion as Uncomfortable. I helped him all I could: He recovered by degrees, yet not fully till after our return to *England*. My Affection encreased with his Seriousness, Deadness to this World; and Vigour for a better; with the Thoughts whereof he seem'd wholly taken up. His Friends and himself, at length, inclining to his Marriage, at their desire, I recommended him to a Gentlewoman, wish'd to me: He was not then accepted; but afterwards reviv'd his Suit, and by other Help obtained her. I refus'd to act farther, being dissatisfied with that change of his Company, Garb, and Carriage, &c. that followed his Father's Death, and his own remove to *Grey's Inn*. I had reason to be glad I did no more. For having obtain'd the Gentlewoman, (who prov'd desirable, so inclin'd to Virtue, that he profess'd he must be very faulty, if she prov'd not very good.) He brought her to *Lincoln's-Inn Field*, engag'd her in vain Company, carried her to Plays, Entertainments, &c. I lovingly though plainly represented his Faults and Duty, and pray'd for him not without Appearance of Success; he removing into the Country and living more restrainedly. But he grew strange to me, and I have some reason to fear the worse. *Thou, O Lord, bear and help, and recover out of the Snare of the Devil.* Keep me (though believing the best) from confidence in Man, and from making Matches, seeing one, of whose Piety I had such Assurance, hath so grossly fail'd; and let all make me more humble and watchful.

I saw at *Leyden* and other Places, (notwithstanding their Reform'd Discipline) Reason enough to love my own Country still better; and therefore my Inclination to *Divinity* still continuing, though I had made some progress in *Physick*, after about a Year absence, I return'd, 1664. continuing with my Parents at *London*, till the *Plague* and *Fire* for a while removed us. *Midsummer* 1668. we came to *Crouched Fryars*, and with my Brother was happy in comforting and diverting my Father, till we were Witnesses of his Blessed Departure.

He left beside my self, dear Brother *Thomas*, born April 14. 1648. We always lov'd, and can hardly remember any Quarrel between us. The youngest Sister *Sarah* also surviv'd, born May 33. — May we see her *New-born*; may I do my Duty to promote it.

Soon after my Father's Death, I was seiz'd by a Feverish Distemper, accompanied with Hypochondriac Winds, &c. which continued, and enforc'd serious Consideration: I found in my self a great change; Prayer and Reading had above seven Years been my constant practice; I was temperate in Meats, Drinks, Apparel, &c. I hope truly humble; scrupulously careful to do no Wrong, losing rather. I gave the Poor constantly the 10th, and of late the 7th part of my Income. Oaths and Curses which once and again I had been guilty of, I long since abhor'd, and could not hear without Trouble. Yet I was dejected, that though I had pleas'd and rejoic'd my Parents; I had not been in all things so complying as I should, and yet more, because I had not so diligently improv'd my Time for God as I might; I hope I heartily repented, denying my self, and bearing Inconveniences for my good Mother, and resolving on greater Diligence in doing and getting good. I was anxious whether Restitution were certainly made for the Wrongs I had done in Cambridge 10 Years before; and determin'd to enquire and do what was further requisite. I was sensible of the kindness of this Affliction in the aforesaid search and resolve, and in the farther Change of my Temper, growing more meek, humble, and charitable: I felt more my vicious Impotence, and the necessity of Divine Grace, as being, having, and doing nothing good, but as the Spirit makes me every Moment.

Before I recovered from this Sickness, I was forsaking my Thoughts of Conforming to the Establish'd Church, by submitting to the Terms impos'd on Ministers to which I had been inclin'd by the Reasons and Examples of several pious and judicious Persons. The formidable Horrors of my Conscience, the Dread of their return by reason of some Doubts I could not well remove, determin'd me rather to a private Life, which I desir'd to render as useful as I might.

I remember when I was one Day discoursing him about Ministerial Conformity, he told me, 'Twas the Declaration of Assent and Consent to all things contain'd in, and prescribed by the Book of Common-Prayer, and the Form and manner of Ordaining and Consecrating Bishops, Priests, and Deacons, that he chiefly stuck at, and could not think that Declaration could be sincerely made by such whose Judgments disapprov'd so many things in these Two Books, as he did: And he was the more confirm'd in his Aversion to so ensnaring a Declaration, by observing several of his Acquaintance that had made it, though under the same dissatisfaction with himself, concerning several things contained in those Books by giving it a looser Construction than he thought the Words capable of, to become less strict and conscientious in other Duties of Religion, than they had been before; which visible declension from their former seriousness and Circumspection, he was afraid might flow from their having too far suffer'd their Judgment to be sway'd and bias'd by their Interest, in a manner of so great Importance.

Hackney, Sept. 10. 1670

I returned from Deal after three Days stay with my Dear Brother going to Aleppo: I parted sadly with one so dear in the strictest bonds of Love and Nature; yet we encourag'd our selves in our good God, whose Favour we had so experienc'd together, and hop'd we still should enjoy when so far asunder. I desir'd all might make me more long and labour after, and prepare for Heaven, where Friends part not bitterly any more, and where God is All in All for ever.

Hackney, Octob. 11. 1670.

I grew ill of a Quartan Ague, as it quickly prov'd. My Prayers were for Christian Patience and Wisdom to bear the worst, and make a good Improvement of all, that God might be glorified, my self and others bettered, and Christ more comfortably in Life and Death Advantage.

June 20. 1671.

Trying Enfield Air, for removing my Ague, I rode into the Chase; and being among the Trees, though full and careless, my Horse by a great and sudden start, turn'd me first on his Crupper, and e'er long on the Ground; yet only tore my Cloaths among the Trees and Bushes. I was forc'd to walk back to Cousin Farrington's in the Heat, which turn'd my expected Cold into a violent Sweat. I desir'd thankfully to remember that Preservation in such apparent Danger, and to be sensible of God's good Providence, as oft as I ride and no such Danger appears; and to be still as careful to perform, as I was ready to resolve and vow.

Hackney, April 22. 1672.

Scorbutick Pains, and Melancholy Fumes much compos'd me, though I had no more Ague Fits, &c. Yet they were not so much my Trouble, as the Diseases of my Soul. My Prayers were for more Grace, that I might not relapse, but grow my self, and make others also more holy; that my Charity might be greater, and the Defects thereof pardon'd; that my own Sins might lye heavier, and Afflictions lighter.

— Ure, seca, Domine, modo non in æternum.

July 26. 1672.

Melancholy Fumes exceedingly disturbed and unfitted my Mind for any Service: I doubt I shall live useless, and apprehended God was taking the forfeiture of those Parts and Abilities I had abus'd. I pray'd for Health, and Powers, and Opportunities to serve God, and be useful to Men, vouching the Sincerity of my Heart; yet presently retracting, having found it so deceitful, and beseeching Mercy and Help for my Saviour's Sake.

Though urg'd, and on some Account dispos'd to Marry, I chose rather to continue single, because I feared such a Change would rather hinder God's cheerful faithful Service; I should have less time, less Money for good Uses, and not be in a capacity to embrace some mean Opportunity of serving God in Publick, like what some had, who could not go farther than my self. I appeal to God, begging his Blessing according (as I hope) to the uprightness of my Heart.

Decemb. 30. 1672.

I was, I hope, truly desirous of being useful, and endeavour'd by several Ways to help our own Family towards Heaven: I was sensible of the Duty and Comfort thereof, and was excited by what I heard of Bishop Wilkins, from such as visited him when he was entring on Eternity.

"He had no anxious Thoughts about his everlasting Condition, which (as he said) many others better than himself had; He approved his own Moderation and the Establishment of the Church of England, only wished some Things amended, and the Management in the Hands of good and prudent Men. He regarded not his Universal Character, which had much impair'd his Health; but when spoken to about a Latin Version of it desired not to be troubled about it, professing his Comfort and Joy, that since his Promotion to Chester, he had encouraged and furthered Preaching of Christ.

My Prayers were that I might not be negligent in my own Sphere, but act to the utmost of my Power for my Lord's Glory, and my own Comfort.

Hackney March 24.

I was strangely troubled on a small Occasion; a Friend having some Discourses of a good deceased Bishop's S. — and it being judg'd expedient to make them publick, I delivered them to the Bookseller, who having printed one without Licence, was afraid to sell it. I was not concern'd however, knowing the Discourse inoffensive to my Superior. But I was quickly troubled that I did not my own Work, nor as I would be done by, Publishing what the worthy

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Author had kept private, and without their leave that had right to it, (as possibly some had) and occasioning others to break the Laws in printing without *License*. I endeavoured to calm the Storm, but it raged the more, till I could neither wake nor sleep, talk nor eat in quiet; nor was it laid, 'till I took off and made away the *Impression*, and returned my Friend the other *Writings*. I desir'd to learn how constantly I depended on God, and without his good Providence, should daily break my Peace, and destroy my self: And I resolv'd, since so small a Failure had cost me so dear, I would be more watchful against all degrees of *sin*, and do nothing without more Deliberation and Prayer.

Hackney, April 10. 1673.

By a Letter from the Lord Drummond, Son to the Earl of Perth, written at the Request of my dying Friend Mr. Patrick Drummond; I had some Account of his last Hours, full of heavenly Expressions, concerning the *Love of God*, and of affectionate *Prayers* for his Friends, and particularly for my self; which, O Lord, answer! About 18 or 19 Years before, the Calamities of his Country having driven him up to London, where he was well entertained by my Uncle Bewley, to teach his Son; I likewise was a while his Care, and he confidently affirm'd I should study *Divinity*: And though my Inclination and Carriage afterwards, especially at Cambridge, made my Self and Friends judge he was mistaken; yet he persisted in the same Opinion, and liv'd to rejoyce with my self in the Event. May my dear Friend's Memory be sweet and useful as to my self, so to his other Friends, and particularly to that Lord, who favour'd me with this Account. My Friend was wont to express a great Honour for, and hope of him, especially for Religion. May he still exceed himself, honour God, and be useful in his Country; and do the more good, because (alas!) so many do none, or worse. O that God would change them, and make more Great Persons Great and Publick Blessings, for our dear Saviour's sake.

Hackney, May 22. 1673.

I had groaned many Days under great trouble of Mind, occasion'd, at first, by some Discourse about *Sacrilege*, and the Story of Dr. Holdworth, who hearing one express great hopes of good from the long Parliament; he reply'd, He would have none expect it, since Parliaments so sacrilegiously alienated Church Lands. I think I had heard as much formerly without being concern'd, but now I immediately apprehended, If the Alienation was sinful, so was the Detention, and thence I might become guilty of *Sacrilege*, if I should enjoy an Estate taken long since from the Hospital of St. Bartholomew the less, in Smithfield, bought by my Father at above twenty Years purchase, after divers preceding Alienations, and left by him, after my Mother's Life, to me.

† Of his Satisfaction in reference to this matter, see afterwards.

My Terrors encreas'd by reading about *Sacrilege*, the Form of antient Dedication, with Curses, &c. † Thence Conscience ran backward, examin'd the most material Passages of my Life, rack'd me with tormenting Scruples about Matters of *Meum* and *Tuum*, and fill'd me with frightful Representations, not only of my quondam Cambridge sinful Follies, but of my following Actions, for Father and Self, (in reference to the aforementioned Estate :) So that I was strangely jealous, I had some way done amiss, tho' very confident, that since my Repenting and Restoring, (in 1662. 12 Years before) I had ever studiously and scrupulously endeavour'd to do as I would be done unto. Nor could I fix on any particular Failure, unless on selling two Horses last Year*. Then I question'd whether my Attempts to satisfy such as I had wrong'd (while at Cambridge) had succeed'd; and St. Austin's saying, *Non remittitur*, &c. made me tremble. I also fear'd I had

* Of this also afterwards.

profan'd the *Lord's Supper*: And when on search, I began to hope I had not, I cheer'd my self with presumption, in thinking of so high and holy a Calling (as the *Ministry*) which such base former Sins would disgrace, I had recourse to God by *Prayer*, though not sufficiently frequent and fervent, and I consulted his Word and Servants.

I could not find it was any Sin for me who had sinned so much, and perhaps hardened some, to endeavour the reclaiming of others. I found great Sinners had been (after Conversion) us'd by the Holy God, as chosen Instruments of his Grace, and remembered many late Examples guilty of sins materially equal, if not greater than mine, whom God yet blest with eminent Success and Comfort.

My fear of disgracing Religion seem'd very unreasonable; the Sins known to few, very few, and far off, so many Years since repented of and forsaken! and my Conversion (tho' needing manifold pardon from God) having long gain'd too favourable a Repute among Men: Therefore, though most unworthy to be honoured by God, to do him any service toward the Salvation of any poor Creature; yet I could not but think it lawful, yea, my Duty, to endeavour it to the utmost of my Capacity and Power, and thereon resolv'd to reject and resist such Suggestions, as Temptation to Sin against my Duty.

As to the Restitution wherein his Friend had so unworthily disappointed him, he here sets down all the Particulars wherein he could remember any wrong'd, and by whom he had made Restitution, in all more than double the Value, and in most much more, and thus concludes.

Thus for less than 4*l.* at the utmost value, I paid with a great deal of Shame and Trouble about 15*l.* and I gave 20*l.* extraordinary to the Poor. I would all that wrong'd me knew I forgave them, though none made me satisfaction, except 3*l.* from one that desir'd to be conceal'd were on that account.

Some Advantage I found by my Troubles in this Affair.

1. I found much Pride within me, and was hereby made base and vile in my own Eyes, and willing to be so in others.

2. I minded too much what was less needful, and these Distractions drove me to the Essentials of Religion, and made me mind them more.

3. I was more convinc'd of my own Impotency and Nothingness, and of my constant dependance on God for Duty and Comfort. I found Reasons and Arguments nothing, 'till God enabled me after another manner to apply them.

4. I was more sensible of the Necessity and Use of Prayer.

5. I understood better the Condition of the Scrupulous, that their Troubles were not to be slighted, as proceeding from Weakness and Folly; but to be tenderly manag'd: And that the withdrawings of the Spirit are something beside Melancholy, though that may be joyn'd with them.

I was warn'd by all to walk more Circumspectly, that I might not provoke my heavenly Father thus to chasten me; and instead of Controversies, especially about small and mysterious Matters, to study more the practical Life of Faith, in nearer Communion with the Blessed Fountain of Holiness, Peace, and Joy.

My Scruples about the Horses I sold, had as little Grounds as almost any other. I repeated my Charge to those that sold them, to speak Truth, neither denying nor using any means to conceal any Fault; only doubted I was not sufficiently careful to have the Buyer acquainted with all I knew my self: It being the Rule of an Heathen, *Tully*; *Ne quid omnino quod venditor novit, emptor ignoret*. Yet I could not learn the Buyers were damag'd, nor say they paid too dear; and good Men laugh'd at my Scruple, professing themselves would do as I had done.

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How happy were Civil Societies, if all acted in their Contracts with so strict and conscientious Justice! The Comprehensive Rule of Righteousness between Man and Man, delivered by our Saviour, Matth. vii. 12. includes this of Tully as one Branch of it. What a vile Reproach is it then to the Christian Profession, that so many thousands that make it, should in their Dealings fall short of the Rules of Justice laid down by a Heathen Moralist.

As to the Danger of Sacrilege which gave the first Alarm, old Evidences shew'd, that about or above one hundred and thirty Years before 1673. Duckets belong'd to the little Hospital of St. Bartholomew in West Smithfield; and was Leas'd by the Master and Brethren for 10 l. per annum, and some Money towards Repair of their Church, and Relief of their Poor. The Result of my Reading, Consideration and Prayer, was to this Effect.

1. The first Alienation did not appear to be Sacrilege; i. e. A stealing or converting to their own Use what was sacred, lawfully set apart to God, nor yet robbing of the Poor.

2. There wanted Evidence of a right Dedication to God, directed and accepted by him. To pass by the Censers of Corah, &c. Num. xvi. 16, 17. xxxvii. 38. if not bellow'd at first by particular Divine Appointment: Yet afterwards, as a Monument of their Sin and Punishment, there were express Commands, or at least sufficient general Directions which regulated the separating of Things to God; and what was set apart agreeably to such Warrants, was sacred, and belonged to God indeed. Thus Tythes, Cities and Suburbs, for the Priests and Levites under the Law, were Holy, (if not the former with Houses and Glebes for Ministers also under the Gospel) and so were the First-fruits, and commanded and directed Offerings. But Histories make it doubtful, whether what was separated in those dark Times, was according to any sufficient Divine Warrant or Direction; or rather from the cheating Extortion of covetous Priests, and the superstitious Errors of ignorant Laicks, without Scripture Rule or End; too oft 'tis to be fear'd not more acceptable to God, than what he forbid of old, the hire of a Whore, or the Price of a Dog.

3. Alienations were excessive, contrary to the common Good; Therefore, though they had been otherwise regular, not allow'd, and consequently not accepted by God. He bounded Dedication of old, and it was not lawful to exceed the Measure in what he most expressly requir'd. When the People had offer'd enough for the Tabernacle, they were forbid to bring any more. Levi was to have no Inheritance, only dwelling in Fields so many Cubits round. The Reason of such Commands hold, clearing and strengthening the Law of Nature, and Statutes of Mortmain, &c. against excessive Alienation to religious or charitable Uses; and for translating what was superstitious, noxious, and therefore unlawfully separated. Such seems to have been our Case. The Clergy excessively super-numerary and debauch'd, and as excessively endow'd; though not an hundred Part of the Kingdom, yet having, as was computed, a Fifth (nay as some, a fourth Part or more) of the prime Lands thereof: Such vast superfluous Revenues might be judg'd rather a Provocation of God, than an acceptable Dedication to him; and therefore ought to be remov'd into a righter Channel. Hence they that alienated such Lands, might not dread those terrible Curses inserted in the Dedication of them, or otherwise thunder'd out against the Alienators thereof. If God had bid them Curse, or in some Cases from Superiors or Parents, 'twere Dreadful. But when such Curses proceed from Error, are Unjust and Uncharitable, Prov. xxvi. 2. like a restless Bird flying fearfully away; the causeless Curses, as if afraid to come near the Innocent, shall be far off, never hurt; therefore should not be superstitiously regarded.

2. If any of those Lands were unlawfully alienated, and Restitution therefore a Duty! They that order'd and acted were the Persons bound to it; or they being long Dead, my Lord Bacon (as I remember) thought that following Parliaments were concern'd; not particular Persons, who may lawfully possess what was at first unlawfully Alienated, upon Prescription, Purchase, &c. Judg. xi. with Deut. ii. Though the Israelites were not to meddle with the Moabites or Ammonites, nor to have any of their Land for Possession; yet having taken a large Country from the Amorites, of which they had dispossessed the other, Jephtha justified the keeping of it, against the Claim of the King of the Ammonites; and it seems of the Moabites also, (or at least Confederates with them) by a three-fold Plea: 1. That the Country was taken from Sibon and his Amorites, and not from the Moabites or Ammonites. 2. They gain'd it in a just War approv'd by God, Josh. xiii. 24. 3. They had long enjoy'd it, towards 300 Years, the round Sum mentioned.

I thought I might make the like Defence.

This Estate belong'd to Sir Stephen Scot's Heirs, after various preceding Alienations, by Purchase, Descent, &c.

2. 'Twas purchas'd by my Father, in the Simplicity of his Heart, at a full Price; and if I surviv'd my Mother, would fairly descend to me.

3. It had been enjoy'd towards 140 Years, since taken from the Hospital, a large Prescription there usually requir'd to confirm Estates; Possessiones sive privatae sive publicae Prescriptione longi temporis confirmantur. Else there would be no end of Scruples, Contention, and Confusion.

3. Restitution was made, in full Measure, by King Edward the 6th, the Hospital advanc'd to a better Condition, and the Church to a Parish-Church.

† "The Hospital of Little St. Bartholomew, in West Smithfield, for the Poor and Diseased; Founded by Raherne, first Prior of Great St. Bartholomew; to be govern'd by a Master and Eight Brethren Priests; (as Speed, Black Canons) for the Church, and four Sisters, to see the Poor serv'd, valued at the Suppression, at 305 l. 6 s. 7 d. Speed agrees, naming the last Prior Balton for a great Benefactor.

Stowe's Survey.

"Hospital of St. Bartholomew, valued at the Suppression, 1359. 31 H. 8. at 305 l. 6 s 7 d. Restored 1546. by King Edward the Sixth, with the Messuages of Gilt-Spur-Street, Burton-Street, Peter-Key, Old Fish-Street, and St. Bennet, Hulda Limehurst, in Stepney, besides very large Collections from the Citizens, so that it was New-built 1552. Since much augmented.

So that whatever was the first Dedication, besides all to be said for the excessive Alienation of Mortmain; and yet more for retaining after so long Prescription, seeing the Church was restor'd, if not continued to the Parish, and in 7 Years the Hospital also rebuilt, and better endow'd out of King Edward's Estate, and by his Influence: I thought I had no occasion to scruple the enjoyment of Duckets, if it should descend to me: As many better than I, enjoy without scruple Estates, for which they have not so much to say.

Hackney, March 31. 1674.

My Days were checquer'd with Duties and Failings, Hopes and Fears, Joys, and Griets. My Desires, and, I hope, sincere Endeavours, were for stronger Resolutions, more vigorous and lively Affections, ardent Love, and sweeter Joy in a Holy dependance on Resignation and Obedience to my God, that I might through Grace write down more matter of Praise and Joy in perpetual well-doing; for my dearest Saviour's sake.

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Hackney, July 28. 1674.

I had in some sincere manner (I hope) served my God, and still mourn'd after a publick Opportunity in any tolerable Circumstances, on such Terms as I could come up to, like what I heard some (though straiter than I) enjoy'd. I was willing to take *Episcopal Orders*, if I could have had them; but did not think them absolutely necessary to occasional Preaching under some publick Minister, which I would have rested and rejoyc'd in; an useless Life being very burdensome. I thought God call'd me to serve him as I could: I had enough of such Testimonies as the Bishops usually requir'd. I was far from slighting the solemn investing Rite, very ready to seek it of them, when judg'd attainable and expedient in my Circumstances. I had likewise observ'd it ordinary in the Universities, to preach long without Orders; as *Probationers*, &c. and accordingly thought my self obliged not to refuse any inoffensive Opportunity of doing good, by preaching where it was wanted, particularly for our aged Vicar Mr. *Tompson*, who greatly needed help, and had sometimes no better than mine.

Hackney, Decemb. 11. 1674.

Having, on repeated Invitation, taken a Journey to *Glastenbury* near *Cranbrook* in *Kent*; I had there proposed for a Wife, Mrs. *Bridget Roberts*, Daughter to the Lady of that Name: I was little (if at all) affected with the Honour, nor was the Portion so great as I had been tempted with elsewhere: But there was desirable assurance of Piety, Humility, good Temper, Industry, and Frugality, and withal, a fairer Opportunity of inoffensive Usefulness than had yet offer'd in my Circumstances.

[After some account of his Courtship, and the Removals he met with, but at last overcame in it, he adds:]

Tuesday, October 5. 1675. we were married in *Glastenbury Chappel*, my self at the end of my 32^d Year, my Wife not 18, by Mr. *Monkton*, Vicar of *Brenchly*, Sir *Thomas* giving her, her Mother's other Brother, and Sister, and a few besides present. I praised God, who had enabled us to follow him our Ruler, Guide, and End; and had, at length, clear'd our way, and brought us into that near Relation. I pray'd it might be sanctify'd and improv'd to the great End which, I hope, we sincerely aimed at.

All this while I endeavour'd, not without some success, that others might be the better, not the worse for me.

Glastenbury, May 29. 1676.

On my return, I set about doing good, having seriously consider'd my Duty to God, my Superiors, and others, and likewise their Circumstances, among whom I was then to live.

The Family and others accusom'd to the old Chappel at *Glastenbury*, being two Miles or more from the Church, prejudic'd against the Establish'd Worship, and the next Minister the Vicar of G —, especially *Th.* a drunken impertinent Sor, that distast'd many conformable enough, and made them approve more private Help. I still dealt openly as I had done before Marriage, declaring my Desire of more publick Service, readiness to read *Common-Prayer*, almost all, going sometimes to the Neighbouring Churches, and joyning in the *Liturgy*; and letting them know my Practice of Communicating, and that Kneeling. I drew none to our private Meeting, but blam'd such as came from good Ministers. professing I would not keep up a separate Congregation, but only while it appear'd expedient Help for such as were so ill provided. I proceeded with more Confidence and Comfort, because I had no trouble, nor heard of any dislike from the more conformable Neighbours, and was more confirm'd in the moderate Course I had taken by the impotent Censures of some uncharitable Persons. My Prayers were to know my Duty, and to do it, pleasing God, though I displeas'd Man.

Glastenbury. Sept. 20. 1676.

[He here gives some Account of some Scruples about his wife's Portion, occasion'd by a Report of her Grand-Father dying in Debt, and the clear Satisfaction he attain'd upon an exact Enquiry into that Affair.]

I was thankful for God's Assistance in doing good for Health and Eye-sight, Love, and Kindness in my Relations, Success in my Affairs, mitigating, shortning, sanctifying Troubles, &c. My Prayers were for increase of Grace and Comfort, for more of the Christian Spirit of Love to all, even to the Unjust and the Unkind, that Love might be the commanding Frame and Temper of my Soul.

Glastenbury. July 5. 1677.

Troublesome Censorious dividing Spirits had occasion'd more Thoughts of those unhappy Controversies about former Ceremonies, Church-Government, &c. And I was still more satisfied, even when most serious, that the bitter Extream of Dissenters, (as well as of rigid Conformists) were very displeasing to God: That spiritual Pride, narrow-spirited Mistakes, and grievous wresting of the holy Scriptures, were the Evil Roots of unchristian Divisions and real Schism. I was much troubled at such Uncharitable and Love-killing Principles and Practices; yet had cause to be thankful that there was more Light and Love amongst those that came to the Meeting at *Glastenbury*, which I still endeavour'd to increase.

I thankfully hop'd I had not been wholly unfruitful, and own'd God's very gracious Dealings in all my Afflictions in many Respects, particularly for regarding my Weakness, removing one Trouble before another came, and supporting under all.

Again, Praises for comfortable Converse, success in my Affairs, some Progress in getting and doing good, and a Life of Love, in some Measure, according to God's Ordinance, with my Dear for two Years past.

Glastenbury. Sept. 22. 1679.

I was awaken'd the beginning of the Year by Apprehension of greater Afflictions which I attempted to prepare for. I found (I thought) Matter for Praises, in what I had been and done, to be sure in many Favours for Body and Soul, which I was concern'd more thankfully to Improve. I was several times still more affected with the increasing woful Effects of Church Divisions. I thought (and think still) I might appeal to God, his Word was my Rule for Peace, which by Study and Prayer I endeavour'd to understand; but I could not judge Concurrence with narrow soul'd unreasonable Enemies of Peace, any other than Conspiracy against it. I therefore openly and honestly disown'd and oppos'd the uncharitable sinful Courses some took: My Desires, Prayers, and Endeavours were, that Professors might have more sound Knowledge and Humility, and walk in the good Ways of Catholick Truth, Love, and Peace. My Praises flow'd from Freedom, from unpleasant Extreams, from untoward Wranglings about little Things, and from losing holy Love, and the Vitals of Religion in unchristian irrational Heats, about the less necessary variable Circumstances thereof. The Mischief of such Courses grew daily more and more evident, and accordingly my Resolution against them: I was again and again thankful for other continued and increased Favours, especially for my Faithfulness and Success in doing good.

[It was a little before this time that the good Providence of God happily brought me into his Acquaintance, and Converse, being invited to preach once a Lord's Day with him to the People that meet at *Glastenbury*, which I continued to do for near a Year: And therefore can give a better Account of what these Expressions in his Diary refer to. He was fully satisfied with his own Practice in Preaching to that Auditory, which generally consisted of Persons not only very serious in their Temper, but free from any of those uncharitable Heats that accompany a narrow Zeal for a Party. They were indeed drawn to attend his Ministry, because as they had but too just reason

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of Satisfaction with the Neighbouring Parish Ministers: So they soon found other Impressions made on them by his judicious and affectionate Discourses, which yet deriv'd still greater Efficacy from an eminently holy Conversation, and particularly from his large Charity in furnishing all poor Families thereabouts with Catechisms, and other good Books, and his unwearied care in visiting them, to examin their Proficiency in the Knowledge and Practice of serious Religion. And he durst not throw off that Ministerial Work, wherein God blest him with so eminent Success, to avoid some Men's weak and groundless Charges of Schism and Separation: But thought that the Salvation of Souls needed better Help, than they were provided for in Publick, preferable to the Observation of those Ecclesiastical Canons which excluded so many faithful and laborious Ministers from being employ'd in the Parish Churches, of whose continued Labours, he thought there was an apparent Necessity. For though the publick Clergy was almost Supernumerary, yet there were but few in comparison who seem'd to have any due Sense of the Weight of the Pastoral Charge; and too few that had Qualifications of Learning and Piety requisite for it. But on the other Hand, he was greatly troubled at the extreams which he thought those Dissenters ran into, who avoided all Communion with the Parish Churches: And to express his dislike of what he thought an uncharitable Temper in them, he often (as you'll read anon) Communicated in the next Parish Church, and was troubled to find that several whom he thought truly good Men, should so warmly censure him for it. Nay, he was so extreamly tender of prejudicing the Interest of Parish Churches, that though he durst not condemn those of his Brethren, who form'd distinct Congregations: to which they administred the Lord's Supper, and all other Ordinances, though without renouncing occasional Communion with the Parish Churches; yet he was so earnestly desirous of an Act of Comprehension, that might (by restoring Discipline in Parish Churches and giving Ministers access to them on such easier Terms as his Judgment could comply with) lay a Foundation of a happy Union; that he resolv'd rather to wait longer for it, than do any thing to make the Breach wider, by going further than constant Preaching, which he look'd on only as a necessary Help, and no real hindrance to the true Interest of Religion in the Parish Churches. And often freely declar'd so much to those that there attended his Ministry.

Having made so long a Digression though necessary, to clear the Passes in his Diary, (by which it fully appears with what Deliberation and Sincerity he acted in these Matters;) I shall before I close it, subjoin one Instance of the admirable Influence his Example and Persuasions had to promote Religion in the Family and Neighbourhood of Glastenbury: For the Heir of it Sir Thomas R—— being then but newly come to Age, did (at his Desire to engage his Tenants the more effectually in the Study and Practice of Religion) call together their Servants and Children every Lord's Day, after the Afternoon Sermon, and himself Catechis'd them. This I have often observ'd with great Satisfaction, and as I am sure the mention of it is no Dishonour to his Quality or Years; so I wish that so memorable an Example of early Zeal for Piety, may draw others to an Imitation of it. Such familiar Instructions would be more readily and thankfully embrac'd by their Inferiors, from those on whom their secular Interest depends, and whom they are sure nothing but compassionate Charity to their Souls, can prompt to so much Condescension.] But to return to Mr. Trench's Diary.

Glastenbury. May 24. 1680.

I had been abus'd, censur'd, and slander'd, Faithfulness and plain Dealing had hard Turns. But my Duty was comfortable, though against the Stream, I had Witnesses of my Integrity above and within, and in the Confidence thereof was plain and free with the injurious Party, to whom I still return Good for Evil, Prayers and Services for many and cruel Wrongs. The Guilty at length express'd a great and sorrowful

Sense of what was past, asking God Forgiveness, and his unworthy Servant, and promised what had flown out in Passion against Truth, should be rectified, and my Innocence clear'd. I was still praising God who enabled me to do my Duty, against such cutting Provocations, and gave me so much Kindness, where I less expected it.

Glastenbury. Jan. 1. 1681.

Thankful Acknowledgment of continued Goodness to me and mine, especially for any Sincerity and Diligence in increasing my own and others Knowledge, Love, and Obedience; Breathing after more and more Holiness, That by any means I might be more like my Heavenly Father, more faithful in endeavouring his Glory, and the good of Men, and more happy in Success.

Prayers for constant Assistance were quickned by the sudden sinking and dying of an old Acquaintance, Mr. S—— who was commonly very cheerful, full of comfortable confident Expressions of Resignation to and trust in God, and of unconcernedness for an elevation above lower temporal Matters: Yet on the Death of a Friend and Wife, all fail'd, and he soon sunk and died. What need to please and seek to God continually, that he may keep us strong in himself, and the Power of his Might.

Glastenbury. July 10. 1682.

I comply'd to stay at Glastenbury, though solicited by other Friends to be nearer them, with hearty Prayers to be more laborious and successful for their good, particularly Sir Thomas, whom I had great reason to Love. I had comfortable Hopes of my own Sincerity, but not without some Trouble for my Sluggishness and wandering Thoughts. I reflected on the Prime of my Health and Briskness, not improv'd as became me for God, acknowledging it just I should not be honour'd to do him any considerable Service, and begg'd Pardon and Strength of Body and Soul, and good Success, for his infinite unaccountable Mercy and Goodness in our dearest Saviour.

Glastenbury. May 28. 1683.

I found several Notes of my own Sincerity, and with more Confidence: Distractions were my Trouble, against which my Prayers were still directed.

I had design'd to receive the Sacrament in Cranbrook Church, not from Fear, for which there was then no Occasion: But from Sense of Duty, and Trouble for the neglect thereof. I had been for it, and oft declar'd my Judgment.

But the vehement Aversion and dissuasion of several good Men had kept me from doing it there: But I was at length satisfied I ought not to please them therein, but to obey the Commands of Christian Unity, Communion, and Love; to perform a Duty, and partake of a privilege sadly neglected, and take away that Offence which Forbearance would fix before some who mistakingly cry out against Offences, which through their own Faults displease.

My Body had continued very crazy, Lungs sensibly heated and swell'd by the Catarrhs, notwithstanding many Means: But God sent me to London, made my Friends urge me to better Advice, and blest what was prescribed, especially Milk variously prepar'd and mixt, with quick and strange Success. Wishes were for an Heart more drawn and warm'd by Divine Goodness and Love.

My Work at Glastenbury drawing to an End, my Conscience witnessed that I had endeavour'd to promote the Essential of Religion, not our unhappy Differences, with as little appearance of Schism, or Faction as I could.

Brenchley, Nov. 20. 1684.

Our sixth Son was Baptiz'd and named Thomas, by Mr. Monkton, our Minister at Brenchley: I hop'd he had not only the Token, but the Saving Benefit of the Covenant, praying he might live, and faithfully embrace it for himself.

This

Brenchly, July 5. 1685.

This Day I received the Sacrament, renewing my Covenant with my God, who is my all, I converse little with Men, but enough to see and hear of my lamentable sinful Distempers. Lord make all better, and keep such as profess greater Purity, from impure Heats and Mistakes, and from doing Evil under pretence of Good.

July 21.

I endeavour'd as I ought to be affected with the Sins and Sufferings of so many.

My Thoughts have been frequently of God, and my Discourses with several as I had Opportunity: I hop'd they would have been better, if less disturb'd by Bodily Indisposition, which still Clouds my Head. O for a better Head and Heart to glorifie my good God and Saviour! induring and suffering whatsoever pleaseth him.

Brenchly, Octob. 7. 1685

Being entred into the forty third Year of my Life, I reflected on my Carriage towards God and Man, what I had been and done in the World; and what Grounds I had to hope for a better. The Result whereof I write for future Use, I hope without Partiality. *God grant I may write better.*

I am unfeignedly willing to know the worst of my self; I think I have good Grounds to hope I have found the benefit of an early and sincere Dedication to God by my good Parents, and of their careful Education and frequent Prayers, and the many other Spiritual Advantages I enjoy'd.

I am pretty well assur'd that I have chosen God for my Portion, Rest, and Happiness; and that I prefer not the Profits, Pleasure, and Honour of this World, before him. I desire no more there than is needful for his Service, heartily desiring and seeking first the Kingdom of God and his Righteousness, and expecting other things in due Subordination.

I have, I hope, heartily, humbly, and thankfully accepted the Lord Christ, as offered in the Gospel to be my Saviour on his own Terms, to save me from my Sins, to sanctifie me by his Word and Spirit, to rule me by his Laws, and so to justify and save me from my Guilt, and Punishment for ever.

I have been and am greatly troubled that I did not earlier return unto God: The Sins of my Youth and my Relapses since, are the Grief of my Soul, which I would wash away, if possible, with my own Blood: It cuts my Heart that I forsook them no sooner, and that my following Life hath not been more fruitful. Yet I hope, I have been, and am sincere, keeping my self through Grace, from my own Iniquity, and living in the Practice of the contrary Duties.

I am heartily willing to comply with God in all things, and to live in the daily Practice of all those holy, heavenly, spiritual Duties of Heart and Life, which my God requires: I am very sorry that I perform them no better, and yet I hope I am not defiled with great or reigning Sin, but am prevailingly his faithful Servant.

I long for nothing more than, nothing so much as more fixedness of Mind on God, more constancy, Cheerfulness, and Success in his Blessed Service.

I unfeignedly desire, and, through Divine Assistance, resolve to persevere and grow still better, notwithstanding all Difficulties, and against all Temptations, to Think and Act according to Matth. x. 37. 38. &c. and Luke xiv. 26. 33. That whatever it cost, I will so run, that I may obtain the Crown, forgetting those things that are behind, and pressing forward, toward the Mark for the Price of our high Calling of God, in Christ Jesus. But thou, O Lord, forsake not me, that I forsake not thee.

I am in love with that Love which our Lord set us such an Example of, and made the distinguishing Character of his Disciples. Thy Charity, I think, is

large and extensive, according to his Will; but especially I have lov'd and do love all good Men such prevailingly; They are to me the Excellent of the Earth, in whom, (as to Men) is all my delight. The Divine Image affects and draws me wherever I find it, notwithstanding Differences in Little Things. And my Love is real and fruitful according to my Ability: My Heart and Hands are open as Objects and Occasions offer.

I have been and am very careful to wrong none, having long since righted those I did.

I have soon forgiven when provok'd; yea seldom, very seldom, retain'd any Grudge against any. I have return'd Good for Evil, where I deserv'd well, and yet suffered much ill; and where I have deliberately refus'd to comply with any, it was because I thought it my Duty for their Good; I have been watchful, Self should not prevail under Shadow of being concern'd for God. I have no Enemies whom I do not heartily pray for, and am not ready to do good to. Praised be God, these Duties of Loving, Giving, and Forgiving, were not and are not difficult.

I have been affected, and desire to be more with the condition of the Church of God, the suffering of so great a part thereof, and especially the Sins that deserv'd them. My Prayers have been and are, that God would refine and not destroy; That he would diffuse that Wisdom from Above, which is pure and peaceable; That he would revive the Power of Godliness, humbling the Guilty of our Divisions, and uniting in Christian, Catholick Love.

I have conscientiously consider'd my Duty to the Magistrate, and accordingly have been careful to obey all his Laws, unless contrary to the Laws of God: And I thought it became me to understand his Will not in the worst, but in the best Sense his Words would bear; remembering that an erring Conscience will not clear me if I disobey any lawful Command.

I have been little inquisitive about the Magistrates Duty, but careful to know my own: My Enquiry was not, *Whether he did well to command, but, whether I might lawfully Obey?* though he impose unnecessary Burdens beyond his Authority, (which is for publick Good;) yet Compliance may be my Duty from Humility, Love to Peace, and that I may not offend, but respect God's Vice-gerent.

I have consider'd the Veneration due to those in Authority by reason thereof, however they be defective; and the Subjection that must be ever continued, though the Laws of God forbid Obedience, and accordingly resolv'd never to partake in Rebellion, though for the best Religion, and most valuable Liberties; but to be still subject not only for Wrath, but for Conscience-sake.

I have often frequented the Publick authorized Assemblies, and join'd in the Establish'd way of Worship, not to avoid Civil or Ecclesiastical Censures, not for any worldly Interest; but from Sense of Duty, and a just persuasion after many Thoughts and Prayers, in which I am still more confirm'd, that I was more oblig'd to do so by the Laws of God, and abundantly warranted by the Examples of our Saviour and his Apostles. I have been still more confident, as I consider'd the State and Practice of the Primitive and other Churches, and look'd, I think, impartially into what is oppos'd by Dividers.

Praised be God, I am still well satisfy'd, that I am not involv'd into so much as any consent to sin; I reflect, with comfort, on my Moderation about small or doubtful Matters, and on my warmth against the Antichristian Spirit of Uncharitableness, Hatred, Rage, and Malice.

I admire God's Infinite Goodness in the way of Salvation, and am greatly troubled that I am no more affected with the amazing Mercy and Benignity of my Heavenly

Heavenly Father, with the stupendous Charity, Condescension, and sufferings of the Son, and with the wonderful Patience, Long-suffering, and Kindness of the Holy Spirit. I desire and long to know and love, admire and praise, speak and act more and more to the utmost of my Power, for the Glory of the incomprehensible Trinity, which hath so condescended to save such an abominable Creature.

I find it most difficult to get and keep an Heavenly Frame without Distraction. I am oft discomposed by worldly Concerns, vex'd by the Sins and Weakness of others; and too easily diverted from my Studies, Meditations, and Prayers, by vain, impertinent, unsuitable, and unseasonable Thoughts: I labour and groan under them as my great Burden of Sins, and strive, alas! too ineffectually against them. What would I give? yea, what would I not give, do, or suffer, that my Soul were fix'd on God; that I could serve him without Distraction, that my Studies, Meditations, and Converse with God in his Word, Prayer, and Praise, were more free from wandering, more affectionate, spiritual and heavenly? Yet I am sure I long and desire to labour more effectually, that God may fill and possess my Soul; that his holy enjoying Service (the perfect Happiness of Heaven) may be more and more begun on Earth. I value and breathe after the Divine Image as the greatest Good, esteeming and desiring to be rid of Sin as the greatest Evil; and Heaven is therefore most amiable, because there I hope to be wholly freed from sin, and to serve and enjoy my God and Saviour in sinless Holiness.

O Lord, help me to do as I profess, promise and bind my self; that my Conversation may be more in Heaven; that thy Will may be more done by me on Earth, as 'tis in Heaven! That I may more comfortably hope and long to be in Heaven! And, O remember thy Church's and Children, and the whole World; let my concern for them all be more according to thy Will, more pure and intense for thy Glory. Amen, for our Lord Jesus sake.

My worldly Circumstances are not without Difficulties and Temptations; considerable Losses I have had, yet continu'd giving largely to the Poor: My Children dying, I did not think it my Duty to increase my Estate. I have now two likely to live, and may have more, so that my charge rises, when what should maintain it falls. I resolve to cast my Care on God in well doing, to exercise my self more than ever, to keep a Conscience void of Offence, impartially to study and do my Duty, and pray continually.

Brenchley, Octob. 23. 1685.

My Practice hath, in some measure, answer'd my renewed Resolutions; I have employed my time better, prayed harder, and endeavour'd, when call'd abroad, to do some good, by good Discourses when I thought it reasonable, and by making Peace. God hath comforted me in the Kindness of Friends; his Spirit, I hope, is with me: May I more abundantly find it, as I am call'd to do or suffer, for my Jesus's sake.

Brenchley, Feb. 25. 1685, 6.

I hope I continue in God's Service, though alas! with many Failings, 'till I was hasted to London and Hackney the 5th, where I had an happy issue of an Affair, which evidently threatned much Trouble and Loss: I could not but give somewhat considerable to some that were, indeed, great Losers. my God, I trust, will remember me for good, and capacitate me to give more.

Thursday, the 18th. Mr. Samuel Barton, Fellow of Corpus Christi College in Oxford, married my Sister Sarah; O may they be faithful to God, and one another, according to their Duty: May he find a comfortable Opportunity for publick Service, of which, alas! I still continue incapable. I have been

lately urg'd, and again consider'd my Scruples (as to the terms of Conformity) but cannot yet see my way. If I labour under involuntary Mistakes, God will (I hope) pardon and remove them.

Brenchley, May 1. 1686.

April 26. Our younger Child Thomas died at the end of a Convulsion Fit, about an Hour long, &c. May we more practically believe we must also die, and not cease preparing for it, 'till we come to desire it, and live in the constant joyful expectation of Eternity: We are many ways shamefully faulty that we do not: Pardon and help us, for thy Mercy's sake. Amen.

Brenchley, May 29. 1686.

On the 23d. I solemnly remembred my Saviour's Passion, and renewed my Covenant with God thorough him, my Prayers and Vows were principally for encrease of Holiness in Heart and Life: God graciously made use of a mean Affliction, (as others count it) to quicken Both the Day following; so that the past Week my watch hath been more constant, my Recollections more frequent, at least every Evening: And I find, to my comfort, my Converse both with God and Man, hath been in some good measure, (if I mistake not) according to the Gospel. I have had many Reflections on God's manifold Goodness, many abhorings of my own sinful villainess: I desire my Actions, and (as God pleaseth) my Sufferings may be answerable, that I may glorify him more on Earth, and help others to do so; and become very ready and willing to serve him better in Heaven. Amen, for my Saviour's sake.

June 5.

I praise God, I have liv'd this Week also as the former; My Soul hath been daily first and last with God: My Thoughts have very frequently return'd unto him, and my Time hath been improv'd with some Diligence for his Glory, my Converse with others and in my own Family, hath, in some measure, express'd the sense of those great things that ought always above all to be minded. My Prayers and Resolves have been, and are for constancy and progress. Amen, for my Lord Jesus's sake.

June 12.

I hope I am still getting nearer Heaven; I have continued my Converse with God, and endeavour'd to quicken others with my self to this blessed Service. Afflictions are much abated, but not my Terror; O may Love be an abiding Principle thereof, acting me with Vigour and Constancy for the Glory of God, and the good of all with whom I have to do. Amen, for my Lord Jesus's sake.

June 19. 1686.

Praised be God, I have endeavoured another Week to speak, and think, and act for him, his Mercies further engage me daily.

July 3.

I have thought daily of God and Heaven, and oft pray'd that I might please him better, and be more fit to be with him there: But I have not been so serious and warm, and earnestly desirous of getting and doing Good, as I was before, and yet I was last Lord's day at the Sacrament: I hope God knows that I desire nothing in comparison with Holiness, that I may be at a greater distance from the Defilements of Sin, and have deeper and more abiding Impressions of his purifying Light and Love, and be more constant and successful in communicating thereof to others. I proceeded not so successfully in my Studies as I would, and I think sometimes have. I hope to pray and strive that I may be and do better. Impertinent Discourses, (the too common bane of Converse) have been my trouble. May I be able to oppose them with Christian Prudence, and to perfume every Place and Company with somewhat truly good; for his sake who purchased and pleads for Grace to help in time of need.

July

July 10.

An indispos'd Body and several incumbring Divisions have hindred me from serving God as I would, yet I hope my main Design has not been wholly neglected.

I was faithful to two Persons in dealing plainly with them about some Matters that had occasion'd several to speak Evil of them. But I was so with abundance of tenderness, and therefore cannot but think one of them blame-worthy for the bad return he made. My Conscience bears me witness, I did what I did meerly from sense of Duty, having great reluctances; which only Fear of God, and the Love he commands to my Fellow-servants, overcame.

July 17.

I endeavour'd to serve my good God, of whose Kindness I have still more experience; but alas! I have wanted that warmth and pleasure I have sometimes had: I long and desire to Labour for it more than ever.

July 31.

I wanted the Aid of the Holy Spirit, because I doubt I do not seek and labour for, and with them as I ought; I walk heavily, yet I hope in the right way. O for more Grace, or rather for better improvement of what I have, that I may have more, for Jesus's sake!

August 7. & 14.

To the like purpose.

My Watch has not been so constant, nor my Converse so useful as it should; less profitable Discourses and Books have taken up so much time: I am not prepared as I would for the Lord's day approaching. I need and beg Pardon, that I delight no more in the more heavenly Duties, and Studies, and am as desirous, (O may I be as laborious) to do better; for the Lord Jesus.

Brenbley, August 31.

I have not been what I would, yet I hope I am in the way to be what I wish, in Heaven. O may I be much better on Earth! To Morrow I design to take a Journey with my Brother, &c. O may I be able to reflect with Comfort at my return on what I was and did:

Sept. 21.

God's goodness accompanied me in my Journey, shin'd in Relation's Loveliness, and Love, preserved my Family, and hath brought us together in safety. May all be crown'd with increase of Holiness and fruitful Gratitude, &c.

Octob. 16.

Four Fits of a Tertian Ague had much weaken'd and indispos'd me; God then took it off, and I seem recovering my former State of Health: I thought of Death with little or no fear, and hope I should have been happy if I had died, though now my Reflections are not so comfortable. I have sometimes thought I was beyond what I wrote, but now I am down again. Bodily Indisposition dulls me; But why is not my Soul more vigorous? Had I comply'd with the Holy Spirit, and conversed with God as I ought, I might have had more of his Comforting, strengthening Influences and Help. I desire to qualify myself for them by a fair better Improvement of all Aids vouchsaf'd. Help, heavenly Father, for thy Son's Sake, Amen.

Nov. 8.

Our seventh Son was Baptis'd and Nam'd Edmund; May we and ours be still more our God's, agnizing his supream Right, and living more in the living Sense and active Acknowledgment thereof, Amen, for our Lord Jesus Sake.

Decemb. 11.

My God has continued to engage me by his Kindness to my whole self and ours, and to our Relations who are pleasant and useful to us. I have proceeded in my course of Duty, but alas too heavily without such Diligence, Lite, and cheerfulness, as become so excellent Service. I desire to be what I wish, and

to endeavour with all my Might: When shall I write that I am and do so? Lord, help me to help my self, and suffer me not to forfeit the Aids thou vouchsafest! May I improve them all with greater Watchfulness, Alacrity and Success! and may I do my utmost for all that I am concern'd to help; for, &c.

Decemb. 31.

The 25th I remembered my Salvation, and renew'd my Covenant at the Holy Table, and before and after having taken some Pains in his Service, sincerely (I hope) desiring and endeavouring to please him my self, and to help others to join with, yea, exceed me. May I still do better, and in the Revolutions of Time, think more of and prepare better for Eternity, Amen, for, &c.

Brenbley, June 29. 1687.

I hope I have been crawling upwards, though somewhat unevenly, and attempted to do good, as I had occasion to converse with Men, and prepar'd my self, (at least sometimes) for Visits, that they might be useful, and not, as alas! too often lost in Impertinence. Many come and partake of what I customarily do in my Family on the Lord's day, after publick Service, I may not exclude them, though uninvited. I hope, and pray, and endeavour, that God may honour me to do their Souls some lasting good: I am sensible of God's Goodness as to my private Concerns and publick Circumstances, and desire Heart and Life may be answerable; for my Saviour's Sake, Amen.

I have been also disturb'd with the Extrems of some Censorious Dividers; I have no Enmity against the Men, but can by no means approve their ways, nor concur, as I am desir'd, with them.

April 25. 1687.

I have been doing my Duty, to the wearying and wasting of my Flesh, I have been twice feasted by my Lord at his Table, I hope not without some Advantage.

May 16.

The different Opinions, and especially the very indecent Heats of good Men, to which the present Liberty gave vent, were no small disturbance to me. And,

July 2.

I desire to lay to Heart the Condition of the Church of God; the woful neglect of Christian Love, in all Parties, and the strange furious Heats that prey on the vital fervour of Religion, provoke God, and threaten Destruction. Pity and Help, O Lord, for vain is the help of Man.

July 20.

[Speaking of every deep and cutting Affliction that had often return'd.] I am far from entertaining hard Thoughts of God; I heartily submit to his Sovereign Pleasure: I acknowledge his Justice might be far severer; and I am sensible of abundance of Mercy, and that I want Thankfulness, which I often beg of him. I am still more confirm'd in the way of Love that I have chosen, and abhor love-killing Principles and Practices in all Parties.

Octob. 6.

Ending the 44th Year of my Earthly Pilgrimage, I revived what I wrote, Octob. 7. 1685. and found my Apprehensions of my own Condition much the same. I have continued taking pains in my Studies for the Service of Souls, to the wearying, if not wasting of the Flesh; yet my Spirit hath not attain'd the Frame I wish: Impertinent Thoughts, wandring Imaginations, inordinate Affections, are my great and culpable Trouble. When shall I find and be able to write better, God grant that I may, whatever I suffer for it!

Decemb. 31.

I have been much perplexed between repeated Messages from Hackney, and others as unexpected from Aylesford; and such Considerations as Reason and Religion suggest about our designed Removal. I was very faulty in suffering them to hinder in such a Measure my Converse with God, and my Comfort,

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Comfort, Peace, and Joy therein; that a Sacramental Communion 25th afforded so little sweetness and Benefit, that I receiv'd no more from the infinite Fountain, ascended no higher towards him, and had not much larger Communications from him. O Lord, forgive and help, that my better Obedience and farther participation of a God-like Nature, may praise thine infinite Benignity, and fill my Mouth and Heart with a warmer Sense of all thy Favours, and with more suitable Expressions: Especially I pray that my Thoughts may be contented, and Labours fastned to present Duty; that without needless projecting for the future, I may do what appears necessary now. Let the Year that is now to begin, be better improv'd than any past: Let me live as apprehending I may die before it ends.

That if I should survive it, I may reflect how I fill'd it with God's fruitful Service, and rejoyce in Hope, that at length Time will be ended, and therewith the too too many failings of my Duty and Comfort. Amen for my Dear Saviour's Sake.

Troubles without, and especially Failings within, have much indispos'd me for Duty and the Sweetness thereof: Yet when lately ill, I had no great Fears, but could think with calmness of a Future State, and hope I shall prepare better for it, and for my Afflictions that may befall me in my Passage.

March 31. 1688.

I hope I have not departed from God, though I fear I have got but little nearer to him: I have persever'd with some painfulness in my Studies, and endeavour'd to embrace Opportunities of doing good according to the Abilities I have acquir'd, and as seem'd consistent with that regard that should always be had to the great Things of Christianity, and the furthering thereof in the ways of Love and Peace. Such has been my Aim in my frequent Thoughts and Attempts to leave this Place.

April 28.

I have continued studying, praying, instructing my Family and others, but with many Distractions, not only from our unsettled Condition, but likewise from other Accidents and Circumstances which occasion Trouble and threaten Loss: I lament that I am so much affected by them, and that the greater Concerns of Eternity, (the Sense whereof should have been more awaken'd and strengthen'd by the solemn remembrance of my Lord and Saviour at his Holy Table, the 15th and 22d.) do not more effectually divert my Thoughts, and raise my Mind. Lord, pity, pardon, and help. Direct yet where I may serve thee better, and do more good than ever. Make me especially useful to my Children as they are capable of Learning and loving their Duty, that I may have more of the Pleasure that I most desire, see more of thy restored Image in others, and feel it in my self. And O! remember thy Churches, particularly in these Nations; Guide and prosper in the way of Holiness and Peace, that walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the Comfort of the Holy Ghost, they may be edified and multiplied. Amen, for &c.

I have been afflicted, but I have been also sustain'd, and I hope rais'd to a more abiding Warmth and Watchfulness in God's blessed Service. Hitherto he hath helped me in all Troubles; I will still trust him, and endeavour my Carriage may prove that my Trust is not Presumption. I have been affected with other Sufferings and our common Danger. May my Prayers and Labours be still more vigorous, and my Praises also for all his Goodness.

July 2.

I have endeavour'd to discern the Mind of God in those Afflictions wherewith he has pleas'd to follow me; I have search'd my Heart and review'd my Actions. I still see cause to wish I had more readily embrac'd all Opportunities of doing Good, and more effectually improv'd them. My Faults towards God have been Defects in Affection and Devotion, in

Resignation and Dependance, &c. for which Yesterday I begg'd Pardon, when I commemorated his Death, who purchased Pardon for the Penitent, and I as earnestly petitioned for those more powerful Assistances, that may more effectually determine me to all my Duty, and enable me to delight in it.

To Morrow I may see my Mother, Brother, &c. O may our Converse be still more holy and useful, that we may have stronger hope of meeting in Glory, Amen; for, &c.

July 25.

Yesterday I return'd from Hackney, having had a pleasant Converse with my Mother, Brother, and other dear Relations and Friends, and our Pleasure was not, I hope, without some Profit, though not so much as I hop'd. Growing Wickedness and approaching Sufferings we could too easily discern and were in some Measure affected with. We desire, and O! may we strive more effectually to know and do our Duty, how difficult soever; and Lord, pity, pardon, help and increase thy People, and prepare us for thy blessed Will in all things; for our Lord Jesus Sake. Amen.

August 6.

The third my Mother came to us, and we may be longer together than we are like to be again on Earth. May our Discourses speak our Sense hereof, and farther our preparation for that blessed State, where parting of Friends will be no trouble.

Sept. 26.

I Yesterday assisted at the Fast in Horsmonden, and being indispos'd in Body, and having too many Distractions in Mind, I fear least I spake unadvisedly in Prayer; and yet my Head is so disturb'd that I cannot recollect in what Words I express myself. I have begg'd pardon of God, and the prevention or removal of Offence, if any were taken, and resolv'd as Opportunities offer'd to be better prepar'd, as God shall enable by Prayer and Meditation. I am even forc'd to remove to Cranbroke, from which yet I cannot but be averse, particularly for fear of Discord with —. Lord, direct us not to neglect Holiness for Peace, nor yet to violate Peace through Mistakes about Holiness, Amen; for &c.

Octob. 11. 1688.

Last Week we removed from Brenchly to Cranbroke. Praised be God I came away desir'd at both Places. I had the Blessings of the Poor I left, and the thanks of the Publick Minister, for furthering his Work, and promoting Union among his People. Lord, make me more useful here, direct in Difficulties, support under Afflictions, and enable in all to honour thy Majesty, and effectually to promote the Salvation of others with my own. Amen; for &c.

Nov. 29.

[He largely relates what past between him and Mr. B. the Minister at Cranbroke to whom he offer'd to Preach once a Day gratis, and read the Common-Prayer in the Afternoon. (So desirous was he of any Opportunity of Service in the publick Churches.) But the Offer being refus'd, on reasons there mentioned, he adds; I then told him, I must preach once a Day at Home, that I might not be useless, and that I might do good to some who would not hear him or Mr. W.

[On the other hand, he refus'd to countenance a N. C. Minister there, as on other Accounts; so principally for his binding his People against all Communion with the establish'd Parish-Churches.]

About this time as he was passing the Yard, to take Horse at a Neighbour's House, whom he had been to visit, his Foot slip'd, and occasioned a slight scratch on the Skin of his Leg: He was not at first apprehensive of any Danger, and though he rode Home, which was seven Mile, immediately upon it, and walked the next Day at least four more, his Leg did not at all complain: But soon after taking Cold, and his Body being always infirm, this slight Hurt was irritated and inflam'd to that degree, that he was forc'd to call in the help of able Chirurgeons.

O o o

But,

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But alas! it defeated all their skill, for it mortify'd so soon, and affected so many other parts, that what with the Pain it brought, and the troublesome and grievous Incision and Operation it obliged him to, after it had first prostrated his Strength, and emaciated his Body; at length it extinguished that Life, from which we might have hoped for so many great and good Things, if it had pleased God to continue it. His Patience and Submission was all the while most admirable and exemplary.

Being almost worn out with the Miseries which the frequent Operations of the Chyrurgeons put him to, he wrote these as the last Words in his Diary, with a very weak and trembling Hand, as the writing and Letters do evidently shew.

Cranbroke, Feb. 19. 1689.

I have been above two Months under the Chyrurgeon's Hands for a sore Leg and Thigh. Pains have been sometimes very great; relapse from Fevers, &c. several; apprehensions of Death frequent; I have not, I think, been impatient; I have been without anxious Thoughts of Eternity; and willing, if God pleas'd, to leave my Body, but fixedly desirous not to continue in it, unless I be, and do the better for this Affliction. Twice, as my ill Circumstances permitted, I view'd the account of my self, *Octob. 7. 1685*, and still hoped it is not false.

Of all Men, I could think only of Mr. — betwixt whom and my self, there was any Unkindness, but, I think, none sinful on my part; I was advis'd against meddling with him on that subject, because I could not see it was my Duty, and it might do more harm than good.

Lord, pity me in my wearisom Condition, help me according to thy great Goodness, refine me for thy better service on Earth, or perfect in Heaven.

Of his Carriage under his tedious and languishing Pains, the following Character gives a brief Account; to which I shall only add, That his Patience, (a Grace that Heaven gives us no occasion to exercise) having had its perfect work on Earth, especially under an Affliction of so long continuance: He was (happy as to himself) dismiss'd from his Labours and Sorrows, and entred into his everlasting Rest. *March 30. 1686, 7.*

To this Account of his Life, given from his own Breviate; it may not be amiss to annex the Character given of him by Mr. Ch. — that preach'd his Funeral Sermon.

I know the usual Flattery of Funeral Orations, and the ill Use that is sometimes made of them, when the Person is of no extraordinary worth to deserve them. But very excellent Persons, whose Lives have been very bright and exemplary, should fall without being taking notice of. And, as 'tis a piece of justice to the Dead, so of useful Charity to the Living, to commemorate their remarkable Vertues and Graces, that Survivors may be perswaded and encouraged to go and do likewise. And such was this great Man. I am indeed, on many Accounts, unfit to give a just Character of him: As by reason of my own green Years; so also because I had not the Happiness to be acquainted with him till the last seven Years of his Life. But I shall say nothing of him, but either of my own Observation, or from that short Breviate of his Life, penned by himself for his own use.

And hereafter some Account of him from the Breviate, which 'tis needless to repeat, because the Reader will meet with it more fully there. He proceeds.]

He had before inclin'd to the study of *Physick*, and gain'd so much Skill, as made him very useful to his poor Neighbours when sick. But as one of the *Fathers* said concerning *Tully*, He could not find the Name of *Jesus* there: and therefore laid those Books aside, and apply'd himself to that more sweet and sublime study of *Divinity*. Here, in a few Years, he exceeded and outstript most of his Age: God had given him a large Soul, in a weak and crazy Body. He was Master of a quick, discerning, solid Judg-

ment, joy'd with an active Fancy, which rarely meet together.

He was indeed a living Library, a walking Study, and carried about a vast stock of Learning with him. And God had given him large Measures of Grace to improve his great Abilities for the good of Souls.

With what Warmth and Affection, with what apposite Expressions, and (I had almost said) unimitable fluency of sacred Oratory would he pour out his Prayers before God! With what Tenderness and Compassion did he invite and urge Sinners to Repentance! How clearly would he explain the deepest Mysteries of Christianity! and what mighty Arguments did he use to persuade to a Belief and Obedience of its holy Doctrines and Rules; His daily Family-Exposition of the Scripture, which for many Years he us'd Morning and Evening; I have often thought equal, for accuracy and Instructiveness, to most Commentators. He took all Opportunities of his own Weakness and Family-distractions, or publick Confusions would allow for his publick Labours: And he never omitted preaching from House to House, by private Visits and Christian Conferences. His Master's Work was constantly upon his Heart, and he readily embraced all Opportunities for it. The Sick and Poor were sure of his Company, and he familiarly condescended to the meanest Capacities for their good. He was as willing to instruct poor Cotagers in the way to the Kingdom, as those of a higher rank and degree. He perfum'd every place where he came with his savoury Speeches and heavenly Discourses: His Words dropped as the Dew, and distill'd as the Rain; and his Heart was fill'd with such a sense of divine Love, that the holy breathing of it flow'd forth among all with whom he conversed.

Thus he was in his ministerial Capacity. And his Life and Actions were answerable to his Doctrine and Discourses.

I need not say how pleasant a Relative he was, how dutiful a Son? how indulgent as a Husband? how prudent and affectionate as a Father? nor need any Man tell me how pleasant and faithful in his Friendship. He had all the Ingenuity and endearing Obligingness that belongs to such a Relation. He had, in himself those four Characters, in eminent degrees, which he was often wont to say he wish'd for in a real Friend; *Pity, good Nature, Fidelity in Admonition and Reproof, and a readiness to communicate Notions and Experiences, for the encreasing holy Light and Heat.*

I must pass over many things worthy to be remembered, and shall only mention some particular Vertues and Graces, which are the peculiar Ornaments of Life.

He gave remarkable Instances of his Piety and Devotedness to God, by his constancy and frequency in Devotion. He took all Occasions for Prayer by himself, and with others, was habitually prepar'd for this sweet and profitable Exercise of Religion. Few ever comply'd more with the scriptural command of *praying always, and without ceasing*. This holy license was always prepar'd for the Altar, though the sweet Perfume was not always ascending to Heaven. He observ'd the Lord's Day with a religious strictness, keeping it as a holy Rest to God, in the publick and private Exercise of Worship, with as little Diversion as possible.

He diligently instructed his Inferiors, by catechizing and serious Exhortations. He express'd warm Zeal against Sin wherever he found it; and his prudent, calm, and seasonable Reproofs were greatly enforced by the blamelessness of his own Example. In such Instances his Piety shone in a bright attractive Light.

His Meekness and Moderation towards those that differ'd from him, deserves next to be remembered. Tho' none was more frequently Zealous about the great

great Substantials of Religion; yet none were more cool and temperate about those circumstantial Differences that have occasion'd such unhappy Breaches among us. He abhor'd all censorious Heats, and I never knew him more heartily angry against any, than against the Broachers of narrow love-killing Principles, of what Party or Persuasion soever. He was zealous for Peace and Love, as well as good Works; of a truly healing and Catholick Spirit. He was himself dissatisfied with some terms of Ministerial Conformity: But yet he encourag'd faithful Parochial Ministers with his ordinary Presence and Communion, and never censured those that were satisfied in what he scrupled, but kept up an entire Friendship with many of very eminent Note to the very last. *Nunquam de dogmatibus Christus differuit, sed sæpe & ubique, imò semper de vivendi Sinceritate.* was a Sentence often in his Mouth and upon his Heart, written in the first Leaf of his *Breviate*, and (as I remember) of his common *Preaching Bible*. If Men fear'd God and wrought Righteousness, he lov'd them heartily, however different in Judgment about Matters less necessary and important.

His humility was also very remarkable; He was cloath'd with it as with a Livery and honourable Badge to discover his Relation to his humble condescending Saviour, as I remember he us'd to interpret that Place; 1 *Pet. v. 5*. Though he was justly esteem'd by those that knew him as an Oracle of Learning that had not many Superiours; yet had he low under valuing, (not to say injurious) Thoughts of himself. 'Twas this indeed that has prov'd an unhappiness to the Church of God, his Humility having stifled many excellent Discourses that might have been of publick use, and made him too willing to confine his Life and Labours to an obscure Corner.

His Charity was very singular and exemplary: He devoted the 10th, and for many Years the 7th part of his Estate to charitable Uses; Neither did he stint himself to, but often exceeded even these large Proportions. He was peculiarly prudent in managing his Alms to the best Advantage; and endeavour'd at the same time to save the Bodies and Souls of Men too, by the same Act to supply their temporal Wants, and promote their spiritual Welfare. How often have I known him visit the Poor, examine their Provisions, and deal out his Bounty with a free and liberal Hand. And still he mingled good Counsel with all his Alms, and affectionately perswaded to serious Piety, which had often a very commanding abiding Influence. He spent much Pains and Cost in instructing poor Chil-

dren in the Principles of Religion, in giving Bibles and other good Books, exacting a diligent Perusal, and frequently calling them to an Account of their Proficiency. He had many other secret Ways of Charity, (as largely appears by his private Accounts) for which he courted not the Applause of Man, but is now rewarded by his Heavenly Father.

I shall only further mention his Patience and entire Resignation to the will of God. For some Years before his Death, God visited him with very sore Afflictions of different Natures: But he bore them all with a great Sense of his Father's Hand, and did not charge his Providence foolishly. His last Sickness was occasion'd by a Fall, which caus'd a small Wound, (or rather Scratch) in his Leg, neglected by himself at first, but meeting with an infirm distemper'd Body, at last prov'd dangerous and destructive. But yet under all the excessive Torments of his Pain, and frequent lancements of the Chirurgeons, he still express'd great Patience, and when at any time the extremity of his Pain forc'd him to cry out, he check'd himself, expressing his Fears of dishonouring God by Impatience, and blest his heavenly Father that worse was not inflicted: Nor did he by Peevishness disquiet those about him, but was thankful to every one that did any necessary Office for him, was pleas'd with every thing that was done, readily condescended to every Proposal and Advice of his Physicians. He preach'd in his Chair and in his Bed: Affectionately exhorted all that attended on him, to the serious practice of Religion, and suited his Counsels to the particular Circumstances, (as far as he knew them) of all that visited him. He died with comfortable hopes of Happiness, and often told me from the very beginning of his Sickness, that he had no tormenting fears of Death: That though he could have wish'd he had been more watchful and useful, yet he hoped he had been sincere, and trusted that for Christ's Sake all his Sins were forgiven. That though he had not Raptures and Transports, yet he had a constant peaceful Calm which continued to the last moment of his Life. And for some Weeks before he died, he longed to be dissolved, and earnestly desir'd, if God saw good, that he might be with Christ.

Thus liv'd, thus dy'd this eminent Saint: And now what remains, but that we take the Apostle's Counsel, as apply'd to this Occasion, *Phil. iv. 9. Those things which ye have both learned and receiv'd, and heard, and seen in him, do ye likewise*: And as the God of Peace was with him, so he will be with you, in Life, in Death, and to Eternity.



S E R M O N XXIX

Preach'd at *Woodstreet,*

On the Occasion of the Death of Mrs. MARY
CHOPPIN, the 12th of April, 1724.

Phil. 1. 23.

*For I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart, and be with Christ,
which is far better.*

SINCE our Weekly Bills of Mortality are sensibly of late increas'd; since so many of our Christian Acquaintance and Friends are under the visiting Hand of God; and several are gone before us into the invisible World, (and some whose Age or Constitution gave us the pleasing Prospect of their longer Continuance with us) it becomes all of us that survive, to reflect and consider, how our Souls stand affected towards that future State that we are hastening to, and know not how soon we ourselves may enter upon.

And we have here in the Words I have read, a Pattern of an excellent Frame of Mind, suitable to those glorious Hopes that the Gospel has set before all of us, and particularly becoming the Character of so eminent an *Apostle and Servant of Jesus Christ*.

He tells us in the two Verses foregoing, *That for me to live is Christ, and to die is Gain. But if I live in the Flesh, This is the Fruit of my Labour.* Or (as the Words may, I think, be more clearly rendred) *This is to me worth all my Labour and Work: 'Tis Opera pretium.* The doing farther Service in promoting the Interests of the Kingdom of Christ, and the Salvation of precious Souls, was a Fruit that in his account wou'd compensate all the Labour and Toil that the farther Discharge of his Office wou'd oblige him to, while *he liv'd in the Flesh*. And he adds, *What to chuse, I wot not, q. d.* Were the Matter left to my own Choice, I should be at a Loss what Choice to make; whether I shou'd determine it for the longer Continuance of that Life that may be farther useful to the Church of Christ, or a speedier Death which wou'd be *Gain to my self*.

Between these two, he tells us in the Text, *he was in a strait*. There were two noble Principles that occasion'd such a Struggle in his Breast, such an Irresolution in his own Thoughts and Choice.

The One was, an earnest Desire to depart, and to be with Christ; and this sprung from a superlative Love to his Blessed Saviour, that made him long to be present with him, to behold his Glory, and to be fully transform'd into his Likeness, and to partake of that Joy and Felicity which he has promis'd to all his sincere and persevering Followers. This Desire was also animated by a steady Faith in his Promises relating

to that future Blessedness, and by a comfortable well-grounded Persuasion of his own Interest in 'em.

The Other was an earnest Desire of being farther serviceable to the Souls of Men in the Discharge of his Apostolical Ministry, which made his longer Abode in the Flesh more needful for them, (both by his publishing the Gospel to those that never heard it, and by strengthening the Converts to Christianity he had made in the Churches planted by him, and building 'em up in Faith and Holiness, and Comfort unto their final Salvation). And this Desire sprung from an hearty Zeal for the Honour and Interest of his Blessed Redeemer, and a tender Compassion to precious Souls from a just Sense of their invaluable Worth, which made him (as himself speaks) *long after 'em all in the Bowels of Jesus Christ*. See v. 8.

'Tis the Former of these noble Principles that he expresses in the Words I have read, even a Desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which, when he regarded his own Interest and Happiness, he accounted for better, than to abide in the Flesh.

In these Words, we may observe for our present Instruction,

I. That the Death of sincere Christians is a Departure hence, in order to their being with Christ.

II. That with respect to their own particular Interest, This is far better.

III. That a firm Persuasion thereof renders it the Object of their earnest Desire.

Of these Heads I shall speak briefly in their Order, and then make some practical Reflections on 'em by way of Application. I begin with the

I. Death is to all sincere Christians a Departure hence, in order to their being with Christ.

1st. 'Tis a Departure hence.

The Word ἀναίρειν is variously rendred by Expositors, tho' by all of 'em to the same Sense in the main.

Some render it, *I desire to be dissolv'd*: And they suppose it to refer to the Dissolution of that intimate Union there is between the two constituent Parts of our Nature, the Soul, and the Body. These are separated by Death, when our Dust returns to the Earth, and our Spirits to God, who gave 'em, and who is therefore call'd the Father of our Spirits, as contra-

distinguish'd

distinguish'd from the Fathers of our Flesh). [But against this Sense there lies this Exception, that 'tis not ἀλλύσσει but ἀλλύσει.

Others render the Words, *I desire to return*. So the Word is taken in Luke xii. 36.

And this is a significant Representation of the Death of a true Christian. He is by his Regeneration born from above, of heavenly Descent and Extraction, a Pilgrim and Stranger on Earth, but nearly ally'd to his God and Saviour, and to the Blessed Community above. The Earth is but the Place of his Sojourning and Pilgrimage; Heaven is his Home and chosen Habitation. And his Death may be fitly call'd a Return to his Father's House.

Others (as particularly our Translators) render the Words, *I desire to depart*. And so they render this Word, when the Apostle Paul saith, *The Time of my Departure is at hand* [ἀλλύσει]; 2 Tim. iv. 6.

For the Word ἀλλύσει frequently signifies a Removal from one Place to another, a Transmigration from one Country or one Habitation to another, that is distant from it. And so they suppose, there is an Allusion here to those that dwell in Tents, and unloose the Stakes that fasten'd 'em, when they have a Mind to go to some more settled Place of Abode. Or the Words may allude to Passengers in a Ship, who loose their Sails, when they leave the Port where they are, and undertake a Voyage to a remote Region and distant Shore. So this blessed Apostle earnestly desir'd, that the Cords of this earthly Tabernacle might be unloos'd, that he might remove to a Building God had prepar'd for him; to an House not made with Hands, eternal in the Heavens, 2 Cor. v. 1. He long'd to set Sail from the Port in this foreign Land where he was but a Stranger, and to make his Passage to the heavenly Country, and the continuing City prepar'd for his Habitation there, and to land safe on the Shore of a blessed Eternity.

Which way soever we render the Word, 'tis here plainly imply'd, That our Souls are entirely distinct from these Earthly and Mortal Bodies; and that their Life is not extinguish'd by the Dissolution that Death makes of the Union between 'em; that they are capable of Existing and Operating in a State of Separation from 'em. So that their intellectual and active Powers do not cease, when these bodily Organs of Sense and Motion fail; and when they leave these ruinous Tenements of Clay for a more commodious and desirable Habitation; no more than a Musician loses his Skill when his Instrument is untun'd; or the Soul itself is depriv'd of its thinking Powers, when the bodily Senses are lock'd up by Sleep. Angels are not less sprightly and intelligent and powerful Active Beings, for their being unembodied Spirits.

But this will more fully appear by what follows.

2. The Death of sincere Christians is a Departure hence, in order to their being with Christ. [καὶ οὖν Χριστῷ ᾔσται]

True Believers while they are here, are said to be in Christ, and Christ to be in them. He is in them by the stated Operations of his indwelling Spirit. They are in him by their being united to him by Faith and Love, and by deriving from him all vital Influences needful for their Progress in divine Life. But to be with Christ can import no less than to be where he is, to be present with him, and enjoy all the blessed Effects of an immediate Converse and Communion with him. This Apostle's Expressions concerning it elsewhere are very emphatical: *We are confident* (saith he) *knowing that while we are present in the Body, we are absent from the Lord* [ἐνδημῶντες ἐν τῷ σώματι, ἐκδημῶμεν ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου]. The Words may be as truly rendred, *while we are at home in the Body, we are abroad from the Lord*, i. e. in a State of Distance from him, where we see him not, where tho' we may maintain some beneficial and comfortable Correspondence with him (as Men do with their absent Friends), yet we have

no immediate Access into his blissful Presence; we are yet sojourning on this Earth, while he has his Habitation in the highest Heaven, we have neither those bright Discoveries of his Glory, nor those full Communications of Divine Light and Life and Joy that he vouchsafes to the blessed above. *We walk here by Faith only, not by that Sight* (which is the Privilege of none but glorified Saints. But (saith he) *We are confident and willing to be absent from the Body, and to be present with the Lord* [ἐκδημῶμεν ἐκ τοῦ σώματος καὶ ἐνδημῶμεν πρὸς τὸν Κύριον]; or, *To be abroad from the Body*, (and all the Society we enjoy while confin'd to it as our earthly Dwelling) *and to be at home with the Lord; with him where he now dwells, and with that blissful Society that enjoys his immediate Presence and converses there.*

'Tis manifest, That the Apostle, both in this last cited Place, and in my Text, is speaking concerning holy Souls in their State of Separation from these earthly Bodies. He speaks of 'em as *present with the Lord*, while *absent from the Body*, as *being with Christ* upon their *Departure* out of this World. There is no ground here for any such uncomfortable Conceit as the Souls of good Men being, after their Separation from the Body, in a profound Sleep till the General Resurrection. For what wou'd our *being with Christ*, or *being at home with him*, signify to our Advantage and Benefit, if our Souls were wholly insensible of it, if they had no vital Perception of his immediate Presence; if they had no ravishing Sight of his Glory, no Communications of heavenly Light and Joy from him. Nay, their Condition on this Supposition wou'd be much worse than while they are *at home in the Body*. For they have now some delightful Communion with him in his holy Institutions; they derive some Influences of Light and Life and Joy from him. But all these great Benefits are wholly intercepted, if we suppose that Death casts 'em into an insensible Slumber, out of which they are not to awake till the General Resurrection. And upon this Supposition we can never account for the Apostle's making his *Departure* and *Being with Christ*, the Object of his earnest Desire. And much less can we account for his being in *such a strait*, and *at such a Loss whether Choice to make*, either of *Abiding in the Flesh*, or *Departing hence*. For the *Former* is manifestly preferable and more eligible, if his *Departure* hence shou'd reduce him to an insensible State, and render him incapable of either *seeing* or *conversing* with his blessed Lord.

Nor do I see any ground for the Assertion of a learned Critick, That this Phrase of *being with Christ* does not determine any thing concerning the Place where departed Saints have their Abode: For we are sure, That our Lord Jesus has (with respect to his human Nature) his Abode in the heavenly Sanctuary. *The Heaven of Heavens* is his Residence and Habitation. He there appears in the Presence of God for us. And how can those be *at Home with him*, who reside in some remote Place, where they enjoy no immediate Converse with him, or at the best have only some distant Vision of him †? † ὁπλῶσιν. We are *at home* with those whose immediate Presence we enjoy the Benefit of; and what less can be understood by our *being with the Lord*, and *at home with him*?

And that this must import some eminent Degree of Joy and Felicity beyond what we enjoy in this present State of Darknefs and Distance, is manifest from what the Apostle here adds upon the Comparison he makes between 'em; which leads me to the next Head I propos'd to speak to, viz.

II. That for true Christians to depart, and to be with Christ, is with respect to their own Happiness and Interest far better, than to abide in the Flesh.

The Words in the Original are strong and emphatical. 'Tis [πολλῷ μᾶλλον κρείσσον] by much, rather, better. He multiplies the Expressions to intimate, That

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That the State of holy Souls who depart, and are with Christ, is incomparably better. 'Tis unspeakably, unconceivably more eligible and desirable, with respect to their own particular Advantage and Happiness. 'Tis an happy and most beneficial Exchange that such make; for them to die is great Gain; as he had told us at ver. 21.

Having lately spoken something more largely on that last mention'd Text, I shall not enlarge on this Head, as I otherwise might.

By their Departure hence, true Christians are happily releas'd from all the Afflictions and Miseries of this Mortal Life. There is an End put to all their Sufferings and Sorrows. They are entred into that *New Jerusalem*, that holy City, where God will wipe away all Tears from their Eyes, where there shall be no more Death, neither Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain. For the former things are pass'd away, Rev. xxi. 4. They are now out of the Reach of all the Injuries and ill Usage of a malignant World. Their present mournful Griets are now vanish'd with the sad Objects and Occasions of 'em. They complain no more of the pining Infirmities, or dolorous Sensations, that they were liable to from the Union of their Souls to, and Sympathy with a languishing and distemper'd Body. Their wearisome Days and Nights are over. The Grave is a safe Retreat from the Pursuit of such natural Evils.

By their Departure hence, there is an End put to all their tedious Conflicts with their Spiritual Enemies. The Flesh does no longer lust in 'em against the Spirit. They are entirely deliver'd from the Remains of that *Body of Death*, of which they here complain'd, and shall sin as well as suffer no more. They are set above all the Temptations of a defiled and defiling World, above all the Allurements and Terrors of it. They are lodg'd in that heavenly Paradise into which the seducing Serpent can never enter, to entice or molest 'em. Their painful Spiritual Warfare is happily ended, and they are come off Conquerors, yea more than Conquerors, thro' him that lov'd 'em; and no Creature can now separate 'em from the Love of God that is in Jesus Christ, nor obstruct their receiving that Crown of Life that is promis'd to all that are found faithful to the Death.

By their Departure hence, they rest from all their painful Labours in the Service of God; and their Works go along with 'em, as the Evidences of their Sincerity, in order to the gracious Reward of it. They have fought a good Fight; their tedious Race is successfully run; they have by their earnest Contention happily reach'd the Mark, and finish'd their Course with Joy.

And tho' all this that I have mention'd be but the Negative Part of their present Advantage by Death, yet 'tis a very considerable one.

But their being with Christ must import much more their positive Happiness.

To see him whom their Souls have loved and trusted in, and to behold his transcendent Glory, must be a ravishing Sight indeed. To have their Understandings enlarg'd to penetrate into the Mysteries of his redeeming Grace and Mercy; to have a more comprehensive View of his Love in the vast Dimensions, the Breadth and Length, the Height and Depth of it; to have thereby the languid Spark of their Love to him blown up into a bright and vigorous Flame, that shall never be abated or extinguish'd; to see him thus face to face, and to know as they are known; and especially to be by this View of his Glory entirely conform'd to the Image of the Son of God; to be imparadis'd in the Bosom of his unchangeable Love, and to partake of all the rich and liberal Emanations of it; and to have the joyful assured Prospect of the Resurrection of their mortal Bodies to a State of glorious Immortality at the final Coming of Christ; all these Considerations must fully convince 'em how incomparably better, with regard to their own personal Benefit and Happiness it is, to depart

and be with Christ. This is as much better as Sight is better than Faith, and Enjoyment than Hope; as much better as the Crown is better than the Warfare, or the glorious Prize better than the tedious Race; or the plentiful Harvest better than the laborious Seed-time; or Everlasting Rest better than painful Labours; or a joyful Return to our Native Country, is better than a tedious Pilgrimage in a foreign Land.

Besides, to be with Christ, or to be at home with him, implies their being present with, and enjoying the delightful Society and Converse of all the Family of God, that have their Residence with him in the heavenly Mansions. They are received among the Spirits of just Men made perfect; and have (as they) the innumerable Company of holy Angels; as their blissful Associates, Heb. xii. 22, 23. They are with all their pious Relatives, and Friends who are gone before them to inherit the Promises. How they shall know, how they shall converse with, how they shall communicate their Thoughts and Joys to each other, we that dwell in Flesh, and make use of bodily Organs for that purpose, cannot now so distinctly apprehend. But that they can, we have no more reason to doubt, than that the holy Angels can thus know and converse with each other, without the help of such bodily Organs as ours. Moses and Elias could thus converse with our Blessed Saviour on the Mount, at his Transfiguration, tho' of Moses we expressly read of his Dying. So could the pious Soul of Lazarus converse with Abraham, when he is said to be carried by a Guard of Angels into his Bosom, Luke xvi. 22. So could this Apostle Paul hear unutterable Words (or Things) when caught up into the third Heavens, tho' whether he was in the Body, or out of the Body he could not tell, 2 Cor. xii. 3, 4. And if the Souls of deceased Saints are capable of knowing and conversing with the holy Angels and each other: They are capable of the same heavenly Works and Joys. And O! how pleasing and ravishing must such Conversation, with all the blessed Inhabitants of Heaven be, to a Soul that by its Perfection and divine Light and Love, is every way dispos'd to relish the unspeakable Delight of it! Whose Heart is tun'd for the Melody of those Divine Praises that resound in the heavenly Temple!

What I have thus briefly mention'd, tho' much more might have been suggested on so copious and pleasing a Subject may be sufficient to convince us, That for a sincere Christian to depart and be with Christ, is, indeed, by much far better.

I now proceed to the next Head I propos'd,

III. A firm Persuasion of this, That to depart, and be with Christ, is far better, renders it the proper Object of a Christian's ardent Desires.

Such was the comfortable and happy Frame of this blessed Apostle, he desir'd to depart, and to be with Christ. And the Word he here uses, implies strong and vehement Desire. [*ἐπιθυμία ἐκείνη*] He thought of it with inward Pleasure and Satisfaction. He longed for the happy time when this his Blessed Change should come. He was fully perswaded it would be a most beneficial Change to him. To be with Christ, was a Happiness he earnestly aspir'd to. To behold him in the Glory of his exalted State, and to be made conformable to him therein, was regarded by him, as the highest Advancement and Dignity he was capable of. And he had a satisfying Assurance of his being thus with him, whenever he should depart from hence. He had the Testimony of his own Conscience, concerning the Simplicity and godly Sincerity of his past Conversation. He could, upon the near Approaches of Death, when he saith, I am now ready to be offer'd, and the time of my Departure is at hand; he could, I say, than break out into that exulting Language, I have fought a good Fight, I have finish'd my course, and kept the Faith; and henceforth is laid up for me a Crown of Righteousness, which the Lord the Righteous Judge will give to me, And not to me only, but to all them that love his Appearing, 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8. And no wonder

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that this made him look upon his Departure
ance, not only without *uneasy Regret*, or *disquieting*
war and Dread, but with *earnest Desire*, and *joyful*
expectation. He was powerfully prompted thereto,
that superlative Love to his God and Saviour,
that was the reigning Affection of his Heart, and
that steady Faith in him that rais'd him above all
doubt, concerning the Accomplishment of his own
 gracious Promise, That *where he is, there his Ser-*
vants should also be.

And this (my Brethren) is a Temper and Disposi-
tion of Soul that we should all labour after, as every
one becoming our Christian Profession, and our di-
vine Faith and Hope. I do not say, we should de-
re Death as a *natural Evil*. For under that Consi-
deration, 'tis not the Object of our natural Desires,
but rather of our innocent Reluctancy and Aversion.
The infinitely wise God has implanted in us, such an
aversion to it, as obliges us to a due Care for the
preservation of our Lives, while he has yet any pre-
sented Work and Service for us to do in this state of
trial. But we should be fully persuaded, That, *to*
depart, and be with Christ, is (to all prepared Souls)
far better. And the Happiness of such a State is the
proper Object of our earnest Wishes and Desires.
And our high Estimation and strong Desire of it,
should conquer, in us, all inordinate Fear of Death,
and fully reconcile us to the Thoughts of it, and to
that appears to Nature evil and terrible in it,
whenever God pleases to send that Messenger to call
home to himself. 'Tis not an Impatience of Life,
merely because of the present Afflictions and Miseries
of it, that the Apostle here expresses; but an high
esteem and a longing Desire of that Happiness he
expected to enjoy, when, upon his being *absent from*
the Body, he should *be present with his Blessed Lord*.
It was not to be *uncloth'd*, but to be *cloth'd upon*, that
he groan'd for. We must be contented to live as
long as God pleases, and as long as he has any Ser-
vice for us to do, or any Afflictions to undergo for
the exercise and trial of our Patience, and our glori-
fying him thereby. But whenever our Service is en-
d, or our *Patience has had its perfect Work*, the
Thoughts of our *departing hence*, in order to our be-
ing *with Christ*, should be sweet and pleasing to us.
This should not be the Object of our Aversion, but
our earnest Wishes. We should then be ready to
leave Death by its cold Hand, and bid it welcome.
We should then regard it not as our *Loss*, but our
great Gain. And of this excellent frame of Mind,
this Apostle has set us a noble Example in the Text
every way worthy of our Imitation.

It now remains that we make some Reflections on
this Subject by way of Application. And,
I. We may here see what a solid Relief, true pra-
tical Christianity gives us against the Terrors of
Death.

Death is to Nature such a *terrible*, and yet such an
unavoidable Evil, that we have great need of the firm-
est Supports when we are call'd to conflict with that
King of Terrors. When *Hearts of Flesh are ready to*
fail, we need the strongest *Cordials* to bear up our
fainting Spirits. Death, to an Eye of sense, appears
truly formidable Evil, that comes to *tear down*
this our earthly Tabernacle, and to force us (*willing*
or *unwilling*) to dislodge, and enter into an unseen
state, *Sickness and Pain before*, and *Darkness all be-*
hind. Some Atheistical Wretches are wont to talk
mainly of *dying hard*, by which they mean no more,
than dying stupid in an insensible Frame, (like
the Beasts that perish) without any Concern about
the future State. Which is, in effect, only *Fool-har-*
ness, and, at best, giving up a Life without any
Comfort or Hope to relieve us against the Agonies
of Death. And I need not tell you, how miserably
such will find themselves undeceiv'd when 'tis too
late. And alas! How disconsolate a thing must Death
appear, to those that think it an utter extinction of

Life; nay, to those who supposing their Souls to
survive their Bodies, expected only their transmigra-
tion into other Bodies, or going they knew not where,
into some invisible state, that they had no Notions of,
no assurance of any invisible Happiness in it, or of
the nature as well as Duration of it. And yet this was
the utmost that the meer light of Nature led the wisest
of the Heathen Moralists to the Expectation of. And
we may say of those of them that suggested the best
Considerations for the relief of our Fears of Death,
as Job did of his *Friends, Miserable Comforters are*
ye all, Job xvi. 2.

But that Gospel that has brought *Life and Immor-*
tality to light, does to all that believe and obey it,
propose the most reasonable and solid Supports a-
gainst the Terrors of Death. It opens the bright side
of it to our view. It represents Death to us in its
amiable Aspect, that should render it to all the sin-
cere Disciples of Christ, not as an Object of their
Dread, but even of their *Desire*. It represents Death
as a *departure hence*, in order to their *being with Christ*.
It represents Death as a Translation from this *Vale*
of Tears to that *Land of Light and Life*, where our
glorify'd Immanuel lives and reigns forever. Death
safely conveys our departing Souls to the great Ob-
ject of our Faith and Hope, that Redeemer and Sa-
viour of Souls, by whom *we shall be presented fault-*
less before the presence of the Divine Glory with exceed-
ing Joy. Ep. Jude, the 24th ver. The Gospel is so
far from suggesting (as some have most groundlessly
conceiv'd) that Death reduces our Souls to an insen-
sible state, or profound Sleep, 'till the general Re-
surrection; that it assures us, That we shall then be
conducted safe to the immediate *Presence of Christ*,
and have our *perpetual abode* with him, to par-
take of that *fulness of Joy that is in the Divine Pre-*
sence, and of those Pleasures that are at God's right
Hand forevermore, Psal. xvi. ult. Death transplants us
from the *Church Militant* here below, to the *Church*
Triumphant above, that part of God's *Family* that re-
side in their *Father's House*, and in that *Mansion of*
Glory, whither Christ is gone as their *Fore-runner* to
prepare a Place for them, John xiv. 2. Their Names
being enroll'd in Heaven, in the *Lamb's Book of Life*
there; it conveys them to the blissful Society of the
Spirits of just Men made perfect. And O how hap-
pily are those prepar'd to encounter Death, that are
firmly persuaded of this *Blessed Issue* of it, and rais'd
to so glorious Expectations as these! How justly
may they triumph over it in the Words of this A-
postle elsewhere, and say, *O Death, Where is thy Sting?*
O Grave, Where is thy Victory? Thanks be to God,
who gives us the Victory through Jesus Christ our Lord,
1 Cor. xv. 55, 57.

And O with what Thankfulness and Joy should we
embrace that Divine Revelation that has set so glori-
ous Hopes before us! That ministers to us not only
such powerful Supports under all the Afflictions of
Life, but such Ground of strong Consolation under
the Agonies of Death! With what Alacrity should
we think of going to that Blessed Saviour, in whom
we have believ'd, and whom we have lov'd and
serv'd, and to whom we have committed our
Souls as a Trust, and who has assur'd us, *he will re-*
ceive us to himself, that where he is, we may also be.
John xiv. 3.

II. This Minister's just Ground of Comfort under
the Deaths of our Christian Relatives and Friends.

Tho' Grace does not wholly restrain that Grief that
Natural Affection prompts us to on such Occasions,
yet it does teach us to moderate it, and forbids us
to *sorrow as those that are without Hope*. Our decea-
sed pious Relatives and Friends may justly say to us,
as our Saviour did to the Daughters of *Jerusalem*,
Weep not for me, but weep for your selves; Once, as he
did to his *Disciples*, when dejected at the Thoughts of
his Departure from them, *If ye loved me, ye should*
rejoyce, because I said, I go unto the Father. John. xiv.

28. Our temporary *Loss* is their unspeakable *Gain*. And, on their Account, we should rejoyce from the Prospect, That tho' we now *part in Tears*, we shall *meet them with joy* in the Kingdom of God, if we be *not slothful, but followers of them who, through Faith and Patience, now inherit the Promises*, Heb. vi. 12.

And this just Ground of Consolation, I am persuaded, we have in reference to that deceased Servant of Christ, whose Death gave Occasion to this Discourse on a Subject, that she her self recommended to your Meditation.

What I would speak concerning her, is not so much to set forth the Praises of the Dead, (for they that have received their *Euge* from the Mouth of their blessed Lord, need not our's) as to offer some Instruction to the living, by setting an excellent Pattern before them for their Imitation.

I have known her from her Childhood, and can speak with more certainty, concerning her from my own long Observation.

As she enjoy'd the singular Advantage of a Religious Education, so the blessed Fruit of it appear'd in her early Seriousness and Piety. And as she early entred under the Bonds of God's Covenant, so she appear'd uniform and steddy in her Christian Profession, adorning it by a Conversation truly becoming the Gospel, without leaving any observable Stain or Blemish upon it. Next to her constancy in Acts of Devotion, in which she shew'd a becoming Reverence and Gravity; there were three Eminent Vertues that shone in her Life with a peculiar Lustre: The one was a remarkable *Humility*, that great Ornament of a Christian, that sets off all other Graces to the best Advantage, and recommends us in the Sight of God as well as that of Men. Another was her entire Freedom from that common Guilt of Sensoriousness and Evil-speaking. She was ready to put the most favourable Construction on the Words and Actions of others that they could reasonably bear, and never appear'd more uneasy then when she heard any harsh or injurious Reflections on those that were absent. This is a Vertue too rare and uncommon among the Professors of this Age, who seem too forward to take up and spread evil Reports of others; who too often set up for rigid Censors of the pretended Faults of others, while they overlook the real Ones of their own; and forget our Saviour's solemn Caution, *Judge not, that ye be not judged*, Matth. vii. 1. Nay too often pass very rash Censures in Matters they do not understand. A third Vertue very observable in her was, her eminent Mortification to the Vanities of the World; she seem'd to have no relish of those idle Amusements, and ensnaring Pastimes, and useless frothy Entertainments in Conversation, which are the too common Guize and Fashion of the Age wherein we live. And such Christian Vertues as these greatly deserve the Imitation of all, particularly of those of her Sex.

And the Close of her Religious Life was every way suitable to the general Tenour of it.

Tho' She had a long and tedious Sickness, and a very uncommon Distemper, yet she was so far from murmuring at the Hand of God, or being impatient under it, as with great Thankfulness to own his indulgent Goodness in freeing her from violent Pain; and to praise him for it. She was naturally of a timorous Disposition, and thro' the Reflections of a tender Conscience, on her own Failings, her Thoughts of death were for a while uneasy and shocking to her: But even when her Fears were greatest, she gave such Evidences of the sincerity of her Heart in her Transactions with God thro' the Redeemer, and express'd so much of a filial Temper, and of the genuine Workings of Faith and Love, Repentance and deep Humility, as were equally affecting and satisfying to all about her.

But as her Doubts were gradually clear'd up, she did especially in the last Fortnight of her Life express very comfortable Hopes of her future State. She spoke of Death in Terms that shew'd, She was not only got above the Fear of it, but that she earnestly desir'd it. She frequently repeated these Words of the Apostle Paul, *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ*. And mentioning this once as a Text for her Funeral Sermon, She burst out into Tears, and said with great Earnestness, and so I do, *I long to be with my glorious Redeemer, whom I love*. The nearer she drew to her End, her comfortable Hopes were enlarg'd. After having twice or thrice repeated those Words, *'Tis an awful thing to die*, she added, *That yet She hop'd, God wou'd be with her in her Passage thro' the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death*. Soon after taking notice of the low Condition She was reduc'd to, She express'd herself to this purpose, *God has brought down this Poor Body of mine; To which when it was reply'd, he had made her amends by raising her to such a Frame as to be able to say that she desir'd to be with Christ, She immediately reply'd, I desire to praise him, and I hope I shall forever praise forth his Praises*.

She once and again said, *O this vile corruptible Body; how do I long to get rid of it, that I may be free from my Corruption! My Corruption is great, I shall leave it behind me in the Grave, whither I long to go*. Another time she said, *I long to go to that Place where the Wicked cease from troubling, and where a poor weary Creature shall be at rest*. The last Day of her Life she express'd a great Impatience to be gone, and spoke with great Assurance of her future Happiness, saying, *I am going to the Assembly of the Saints, to God and his Angels, and a little before she expir'd told those about her, she doubted not, she shou'd shortly meet them again; and that they should be happy together forever*.

I have the more largely recited these Passages, because they are a convincing Evidence of the Excellency of our Christian Faith, and of the mighty Power of these Invisible Realities of the World above, not only to quicken and animate us in all the Duties of the Christian Life, but to arm and fortify us against all the inordinate Fears of Death, and to prepare us for an abundant Entrance (in the lively Exercises of divine Faith and Hope) into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. O happy Souls that can thus look Death in the Face without Fear! That can stand on the brink of the Grave, and triumph over it! That so love their Blessed Saviour as to long to be with him! That can with the Prospect thereof as freely lay by this Garment of Flesh, as pious *Elijah* dropp'd his Mantle on the Earth, when he ascended up to Heaven!

III. Let me hence exhort all of you so to live, as that your Death may be a *Departure* hence in order to your being with Christ; and may under that Notion be the Object not of your Aversion, but your earnest Desire.

Those must live to Christ here who expect upon their Departure hence to go to him, and live with him forever. When this blessed Apostle cou'd say, *For me to live is Christ*, He might truly add, *For me to die is Gain*.

But alas, For those that slight an offer'd Saviour, and that stupidly neglect that great Salvation, that he has purchas'd and reveal'd; For those that reject his rightful Authority, and refuse to take his gracious Yoke upon them, and whose Lives carry an open Contradiction to the great End of his coming into the World, which was to save them from their Sin, and to bless them by turning them from their Iniquities. How can they desire or hope upon their departure hence to be with him, whose Blood they have trampled on by rejecting the Terms of an offer'd Pardon, whose

those Grace they have resisted, and to whose tendered Salvation they have prefer'd the Satisfaction of their sensual Lusts, or the tempting Vanities of this present World! His Presence wou'd rather be terrible than desirable to them, and they could look on him with no other than a trembling and despairing eye.

And for such Hypocrites as have contented themselves with an empty and barren Profession, with calling him Lord, Lord, with hearing him teach in their Streets, and eating and drinking at his Table, with hearing his sayings while they did them not; For those that only flattered him with their Mouths, and lied to him with their Lips, while their Hearts were not right with them; nor stedfast in his Covenant, What other can they expect, when they come in their Distress to cry to him, Lord, Lord, Open to us, but that which he has for their warning foretold them of, *I know ye not, Depart from me, ye Workers of Iniquity.* Matth. xv. Matth. vii. 21. &c. compar'd with the xxvth, 1, and 12th v.

'Tis only such of you as have made the glorifying and pleasing your Redeemer the chief end and scope of your Life, his holy Law the Directory and Rule of it, his bright Exemplar the Pattern you have sincerely endeavour'd to be conformed to, by walking in some measure of Sincerity as he walk'd, and have made the heavenly Happiness which he has reveal'd, and offer'd to you the chief Object of your Hope and Prosecution: 'Tis I say such only that can hope on their Departure hence to be with him.

O then let me Exhort all of you, as ever you expect such a blessed issue of Death as this, of enjoying his blissful Presence, let your Life be employ'd in serious Preparation for it.

Accept and receive this Behaviour, by a firm Belief of his heavenly Doctrine, by a voluntary Subjection to his salutary Government, and an humble Assistance in his powerful Mediation. Return to an offended God by a sincere Conversion, and sue for Reconciliation thro' his attoning Blood.

Let your Life be entirely consecrated to his Glory and Service. Let this blessed Saviour be precious and honourable in your Esteem; Let him dwell in your Hearts by Faith and Love. Live the Life you live in the Flesh by the Faith of the Son of God. Manifest the sincerity of your Love to him by your care to keep his Commands. Abound in all the Fruits of Righteousness that are thro' him, to the Glory of your heavenly Father. Make it your studious Endeavours to imitate him by a Christ-like Spirit and Conversation. Take his exceeding great and precious Promises for your chosen Heritage and Portion. Commit your precious Souls and your eternal Concerns into his safe and merciful Hands. Maintain such a vital Communion with him, as your Mediator and Saviour, your Head and Lord here on Earth; and cleave to him with inviolable Fidelity and steady Perseverance

in Faith and upright Obedience: And then may you comfortably expect that upon your departure hence you shall be with him forever, and upon your being absent from the Body, you shall be present with your beloved Lord. He will never cast out those that thus come to him, and come to the Father by him. John vi. 37. 'Tis his encouraging Language to all such, *My Sheep hear my Voice, and I know them; and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal Life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my Hand,* John x. 27, 28.

And if you are conscious that this is the main business and scope of your Life, you have just reason to make your Departing hence in order to your being with Christ; (whenever it pleases God to call you hence) the Object of your earnest Wishes and Desires. You are not his sincere Disciples, if you think it not, (with respect to your own particular Interest and Happiness) far better to be with Christ, than to abide in the Flesh. If you prefer not the heavenly Felicity which those who are in his immediate Presence partake of, far preferable to all the Enjoyments of Sense that this World can afford.

I am sensible many sincere Christians will be ready to say, if they were sure of their Interest in Christ, they shou'd account their being with him far better, and make it the Object of their Desire. But their Doubts about that make Death appear terrible to them.

To this I wou'd return this brief Answer, so far as your accounting it far better to be with Christ, does produce sincere Endeavours to obey and serve him; to imitate and please him, 'tis a good and solid Evidence of your Interest in him. But if your Doubts arise from your frequent Declensions, and uncircumspect Walking, there is no other effectual way of removing them, than by greater Vivacity, Diligence and Stability in the ways of Faith and Holiness: And therefore instead of bitter Complaints of your Doubts and Uncertainty, take this effectual Method to resolve and clear them; Give all Diligence to make your Calling and Election sure, by adding one Grace to another, abound more in every good Word and Work, and then shall a rich Entrance be administred to you into the everlasting Kingdom of your Lord and Saviour. And if you thus sincerely love and serve and trust in him, the Thoughts of going to him, will be truly sweet and comfortable. And you will not be afraid or unwilling whenever your Service on Earth is ended, to pass thro' that dark Valley and Shadow of Death, that will conduct you into the blissful presence of your God and Saviour, in those Mansions of Light and Glory, where he is now preparing a place for your eternal happy Abode with himself. And happy those who by a full assurance of Faith and Hope are brought to this excellent Frame (so suitable to the Gospel-Revelation) *Even to desire and long to depart and be with Christ;*

THE
SIN and DANGER
OF
QUENCHING the *SPIRIT*.
WITH
Motives and Directions to prevent it.
IN TWO
S E R M O N S.



TO THE
CHRISTIAN READER.

“ **T**HE Doctrine of the Trinity is manifest in several Impressions on the Creation, and the Government of innocent *Adam*; yet, in the Recovery of fallen Man, it's more evident, than in any thing as yet obvious to this lower World.

“ The Son assuming our Nature, makes Atonement for Sin, and vindicates the Honour of the Creator's Law, whilst he restoreth our Felicity and Holiness as Redeemer; and as a means of investing us in the good he purchased, brings us to acknowledge and distinctly regard the Father, Son, and Spirit, in our Baptismal Dedication.

“ The Holy Spirit (of whom the ensuing Sermons treat) hath his distinct Concern in the Essentials of this Work. He formed and purified the Soul and Body, which the essential Word was to assume, and inhabit; qualifying this embodied Soul with all Graces, far beyond the measure of all other created Beings. He is eminently concerned in the Application of Redemption to Sinners; for he inspired the Instruments by whom the Redeemer's Law is notified to the World. By his powerful Operation, the Doctrines and Testimony of Christ are confirmed to the sufficient Conviction of the inquisitive World, in many Miracles; and among others, in introducing the Life of Christ into so many Apostate Sinners successively.

“ The Energy of the Word, as a Seed of Life is by him, as active in this Vehicle, which were otherwise unapt for such amazing Effects, on so indisposed an Object as a degenerate Soul, especially at that Enmity to the Divine Life, and Remoteness from unseen things, as to any powerful View; which the Temper and Carriage of all Men left to themselves do indicate.

“ Every Grace in Man is his Fruit, as the Enlightner and Sanctifier of Souls; and that holy Principle comprehensive of all holy Dispositions possesseth Men, as born of this Spirit; whereby he renders the Soul a delightful Habitation unto God, and meet for those Actings and Glory Christ designeth the redeemed to.

“ The giving this Spirit, or present determining his saving Operations on the Soul, is that means whereby Christ begins that mystical Union, and those happy Relations expressed in various Metaphors; which our believing Consent, as the Effect of his active Presence, consummates: And the abiding Relation of this Spirit to the Soul, as a special Worker and Maintainer of Grace, is that which is called the Indwelling of the Holy Ghost. In like manner, the saving Operations of the Spirit are called his Earnest; which, with his illuminating of the Soul, to perceive the Conformity of those to the Gospel Rule, and adding Power to the decisive Sentence of Conscience in this Matter, constitute the Witness of the Spirit.

“ This Holy Spirit doth not only at first introduce, and afterwards evidence Grace, but by his Influences he actuateth this his own Off-spring; exciting its Exercise, and adding to its Measure: In all which Respects, tho' a renewed Nature die not, because the Spirit doth not totally depart, yet by his Recesses it becomes afflictively faint, unactive, and abated in its self-evidencing Lustre. Neither is it unobservable, that tho' these additional Influences are in some sort determinable by the Spirit, as a Sovereign Agent, whence he sometimes surprizeth a careless indisposed Frame, with marvellous Revivals, enlarging us in a joyful Sense of God's Favour, as well as Strength and Freedom for holy Employments. Yet usually he observeth a fixed Rule, delighting to assist the prepared industrious circumspect Soul, whilst he leaveth the idle careless Christian to bemoan his Darkness and Weakness, under the Spirit's Withdrawings; His Visits being ordinarily proportioned to our Zeal for them, and Meetness to improve them. How needful then is the Subject of these excellent Sermons, which discover the solid Judgment and experimental Piety of the Author? the Design whereof is to convince thee of this Method of the Spirit, and warn thee against those Forfeitures, which are too common, and so fatal to the Comfort and Improvement of Believers.

“ What sad Evidences are we under, that the Quenching of the Spirit is little accounted of? Most Men seem guilty of an offensive Behaviour towards him; the general Temper giveth Cause of Fear, that this holy Fire burneth less vehemently, than sometimes it was accustomed to do.

“ Do not we perceive a Spirit of Prayer more remiss, Ordinances less effectual to Conversion or Edification, and the Conversation of Professors attended with less Conviction on the Minds of the World; yea, filled with such Distempers and Scandals, as are equally a Cause and Sign of the Departure of the Spirit? Which Things are so notorious, that I almost despair of a tolerable Aspect on the State of the Church, or a Fitness for any great Mercies, before there be a new Effusion of this holy Spirit.

“ Can we then wonder at that Levity and Unsuccessfulness in all holy Administrations, joined with profane Practices of such, who are so far degenerated from Christian and Protestant Principles, as to deny and despise the Operations of this holy Spirit? Which comes next (however it's minded) to the Sin

“ against

“ against the Holy Ghost, especially in such who have felt any of its Workings, and profess to receive him in their Designation to the Office of the Ministry.

“ But if thou art a Christian indeed, thou art a Person by whom the Spirit witnesseth to the Truth of the Scriptures, and that holy Religion, which is a Transcript of these sacred Writings on thy own Heart; neither canst thou be unacquainted; how thy Vigour in all Duties abates, or improves, as the Spirit communicates or with-holds his Influence. Sure thou art not now to be informed, that a Soul may pine away under the greatest Helps, when the Withdraws of this invisible Agent testifies against thy Disobedience to his Motions, or Independance on his Operations. He is a Stranger to himself, who feels not a Darkness on his Evidences, and Interruption in his Spiritual Joy, whenever the Spirit is grieved by frequent Neglects, or deliberate Sins.

“ Therefore it's thy great Concern to govern thy self with that Tendernefs and Caution, as expresseth not only a Conviction that the Rule of thy Behaviour is exact, and the Sanction thereof lawful and sure: but that also thy Communion is with this Holy Spirit, who observes and resents thy most hidden Disposition, and evidenceth his Approbation or Dislike, by what will much affect the flourishing or withering State of thy Soul.

“ He is not skilful in the Methods of God's Government over his People, who knows not that the Favour or Displeasure of God are not so much expressed in outward Providences, as in the abundant Communications of his Spirit to the Soul, or the Abatements thereof. And indeed every Dispensation is more or less conducive to the great Design of the Redeemer, and the best Advantages of the Church; as the Degrees of the Effusions of the Spirit be. Wherein lay the Privilege of the Gospel-state in its last Edition, but that it is the Ministration of the Spirit? This is its Glory, the Spirit of Grace operates more under this Form, than it did in the *Jewish* Economy, comparatively wherewith (not absolutely) the *Mosaical* Form was a dead Letter. And it's not to be denyed, that still the gradual Advances of Christ's Interests, find these Effusions so far appropriated to them, as that less pure Administrations become sensibly deserted, as soon as pure ones considerably obtain in any Place.

“ Hence the happiest State of the Church is reserved for the most eminent Pourings out of this Spirit, whereby Knowledge, Love and Holiness will be diffused more extensively as to Places, and Quality of Persons, especially Magistrates; and more intensively as to the Degree of those Endowments in such as were before Partakers of them. Neither dare I exclude this anointing as a Fitness to subserve Providence, in accomplishing the great things described in Prophetick Scriptures, relating to the latter Days.

“ To this eminent Pouring out of the Spirit are still ascribed all those excellent Effects: And when I further consider, that Christ left his Spirit to supply his Absence, as more advantageous to his Church than his bodily Presence; I can hope for greater things from the Spirit's more abundant Influence, than from Christ's bodily Appearance in the Air before the Day of Judgment, as being far more adapted to Spiritual Effects, and that Life of Faith, which Believers are to live 'till the heavenly Vision, than a bodily Sight of Christ can be.

“ I shall detain thee no longer from perusing these serious Discourses, which are published not by the Author's Purpose, but at the Desire of a pious, worthy Gentleman, who procured them from him for his own Use. That the Spirit himself would plead his own Cause, and dispose thy Heart to that well-pleasing behaviour towards him, as may be attended with that growing Liberty and Strength in thy Soul, which cannot be void of the purest Joys; is the earnest Prayer of



S E R M O N XXX.

I T H E S S A L. V. 19.

Quench not the Spirit.

WE do so entirely depend on the Influences of the Holy Spirit, both to form in us the Principles of a holy heavenly Life, and to improve and advance them towards their Perfection in Life Eternal, that this excellent Caution of the Apostle *Paul*, can never be unseasonable. And alas! there are but few of us that observe the temper of our own Spirits, and their progress or declension in Holiness. But we often find those sad effects of our quenching the Holy Spirit in his recesses, and the suspension of his gracious Aids, that render such a dissuasive as this in the Text too necessary to us. The Apostle amongst many other excellent Counsels in the foregoing part of the Chapter, adds these two, *Pray without ceasing, ; in every thing give thanks*, verse 17, 18. And because the Assistance of the Holy Spirit was so absolutely needful, to excite and improve all those Graces in us, which are the very Life and Soul of our Prayers and our Praises.

He adds this solemn Caution in the Text, *Quench not the Spirit*. q. d. Beware of doing any thing that may weaken or extinguish the Graces and the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.

This dissuasive then of the Apostles, I shall propose as the Subject of your present Meditations :

We should all beware of quenching the Spirit.

In prosecution of this Subject, we must enquire what we must here understand by the Spirit, and what by our not quenching the Spirit.

1. *What must we understand by the Spirit?*

Ans. There is no doubt, the Cause is here put for the Effects, or the Holy Spirit, (the blessed God in his third Mode of Subsistence) for the Product of his Operations on the Souls of Men, his Gifts and Graces.

Sometimes the Spirit denotes those miraculous extraordinary Gifts, which he communicates to Men, of *speaking with Tongues*, of *Healing*, of *Prophecy*, of *Miracles*. Sometimes the ordinary Gifts conveyed to Men in the use of ordinary Means, to qualify them for the Duties of that Station and Places which they hold in the Church of Christ, as Members of his mystical Body, that must be mutually useful to each other. See both kinds of Gifts mentioned, 1 Cor. xii. 7, 8, 9, &c. *All these worketh, that one and self-same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally as he will.*

Sometimes the Spirit is put for the Effects or Impressions, which his gracious Operations produce in the Souls of Men ; especially for those Graces or holy Dispositions, which he forms and encreases in all the Children of God. Whence he is called the *Spirit of Grace* ; and all holy Dispositions in us are called his *Fruits*, Gal. v. 22. Zech. xii. 10. Heb. x. 29. He is also called the *Holy Spirit*, not so much with respect to his *Essential Purity*, as to his *sanctifying Influences*, Eph. iv. verse 30.

Now all these may be justly included here. We must do our utmost to increase and improve all the Gifts or Graces which the Holy Spirit imparts, and must do nothing to abate or extinguish any one of them. The Context justifies this comprehensive sense. But that leads me to the second

Quest. *What must we understand by this Caution, Quench not the Spirit?*

Ans. The word ἀβύρωτε, evidently alludes to that opposite Metaphor, by which the Operations of the Holy Spirit are frequently represented under the Emblem of *Fire*.

Jesus Christ is said to baptize with the *Holy Spirit*, and with *Fire*, Mat. iii. 11. (or with that *Holy Spirit* that is compared to *Fire*.) Agreeably hereto, when the *Holy Spirit* miraculously descended on the Apostles, he assumes the resemblance of Cloven Tongues, as it were of *Fire*, Acts ii. 3. And even in the Writings of the Prophets, he is describ'd as a *Spirit of Judgment*, and a *Spirit of Burning*, Isa. iv. 4. And the true Messiah, on the account of his dispensing the *Holy Spirit*, is compared to a *Refiner* : the Operations of his Spirit being his *refining fire*, Mat. iii. 2, 3. And the Emblem is very significant and expressive of the Operations of the Holy Spirit, whose great Office it is to kindle *Rays of Divine Light* in our *Minds*, and *Flames of Divine Love* in our *Hearts*, even such *Flames* as consume our *Lusts*, and refine us from the Dross of this Earth, and render us pure and holy in the Eyes of God.

In allusion to this Metaphor, the Apostle cautions us against *quenching the holy Spirit*, against abating or suppressing any Spark of divine Light or Life, which that holy Spirit has enkindled in our Minds, against doing any thing to weaken or frustrate the Success of those Influences of the Holy Spirit, whereby he should enlighten, refine, and purify our Souls.

Now to pursue this obvious Allusion, as there are two ways by which Fire is quenched or goes out, either by *neglecting to blow it up*, or by *throwing Water upon it* ; so we may be said to quench the holy Spirit, either by *neglecting to improve its Influences in order to the exciting and actuating our Graces and Gifts*, or by *resisting or counteracting those Influences*.

1. *We may be said to quench the Holy Spirit by not improving his Influences in order to the exciting and actuating those Graces and Gifts, which he communicates to us.*

Fire must be preserved and encreased with a continual Supply of Fuel, and the Flame will go out of it self, if not kept in by our care to blow it up. So should the motions of the Spirit of God be cherished, and the Flames enkindled in our Hearts, preserved and enlarged by frequent and diligent excitation. There is less expressed in the words, than is intended (according to a very usual Figure) and *quench not the Spirit*,

Spirit, is as if the Apostle had said, *value and improve all the gracious Operations of the Holy Spirit.*

If he darts any Rays of Knowledge into your Minds, cherish them, and by study and meditation encrease 'em into higher measures of divine Light. If he enkindles any Spark of divine Life and Love into your Hearts, quicken and blow it up into a holy vigorous Flame.

If he imparts any Gifts that may render you the more capable to diffuse Divine Light and Life, and Love into the Souls of others, employ them with Diligence, and improve them with continu'd and faithful Exercise. For those gracious Habits will languish and be in Danger of expiring, which we do not enliven and increase by frequent renewed Acts: And even those Gifts will be sensibly abated and decayed, which holy Use does not keep up in their due vigour. And we may justly fear, lest the holy Spirit suspend those Influences of his, whereby our Graces should be strengthened, and our Gifts enlarged; when we do not thankfully receive them, and industriously improve them by the free concurrence and use of our own reasonable Powers. We cannot expect those Divine Aids to advance us in Holiness, whilst we sit down with folded Arms, indulging a wretched Sloath and careless Indifferency. They are then usually dispensed most liberally when we earnestly implore them, when we call up all the Powers of our Souls to our Duty, and are ready to act up to the height of those holy Principles formed in us, and of those Impressions the Grace of God makes upon us.

Thus with respect to Gifts, in opposition to this dangerous Sin of quenching them, we are commanded to stir them up thus, *2 Tim. i. 6.* The Word in the Original is *ἀνακαυχῶμαι*, which is plainly a Metaphor borrowed from Fire, which must be stirred or blown up to make it burn clear. So must we excite them by holy Vivacity and Diligence in the exercise of them.

Secondly, *We may be said to quench the Spirit by resisting and counter-acting its holy Influences.*

Even as Water when thrown on the Fire, either wholly extinguishes, or greatly abates the heat and force of it. And this is a more dangerous degree of the Sin we are caution'd against in the Text. All sin does, in some degree, tend to quench the Spirit, as it does in some degree oppose the tendency of its gracious Operations. But yet it's not meer sins of Ignorance, or meer Inadvertency and Infirmary, that are in any eminent or strict Sense, said to quench the Spirit. But those sins plainly do so which are in their own nature hainous and deliberate, committed against the clear Light and powerful Checks of the Holy Spirit. Sins that are acted in the face of our strong Convictions of the Evil of them, and our former Resolutions against them, which the Holy Spirit had excited; these dangerously tend to quench the Holy Spirit. These give a deep Wound to our Graces, and dreadfully weaken the strength of our holy Habits. These highly provoke that holy Spirit to depart from us, and give us up, for the present, to the Power of Temptations, when we chuse rather to follow the Conduct of our brutish Lusts than his holy Dictates. By these we are said to grieve the Holy Spirit, *Eph. i. 30.* because we do what he highly dislikes, and will evidence his dislike of by the suspension of his Influences of Grace and Comfort: Nay, by these we are said to resist the Holy Spirit, *Acts vii. 15.* Not that we can hinder any effects, that his infinite Power resolved to produce: But we, alas too often! not only turn a deaf Ear to his Dictates and Motions, but act in opposition to them, and pursue the contrary Dictates and Motions of sin. And no wonder that such perverse resistance should provoke the Holy Spirit to retire from us, and cease those gracious Sollicitations which we reject, to gratify some brutish Lust, some base and hateful Passion; such presumptuous sins highly tend to extinguish the Light that shines in our Minds; to lay waste our Consciences, to weaken

and suppress those sparks of divine Life that are kindled in our Hearts. They are as so much Water thrown on the Flames, that extremely endanger the quenching of them.

The reasons that might be urged to enforce the caution, will as properly serve as Motives in the Application.

And, First, I would address myself, to those hardened Sinners that have so far quench'd the Holy Spirit, as now to go on in an open course of Sin, with little or no remorse of Conscience.

The case of such is dreadful, and they have great reason (how little Disposition soever they have) to consider it before it become remediless.

There is too just ground from the Scriptures, to believe that some may by a long continued resistance of the Holy Spirit, sin themselves even in this Life into a state of incurable Impenitency. We read of such as were once enlightened, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Powers of the World to come, that if they fall away, 'tis impossible to renew them to Repentance, *Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.*

And tho' the Words following, viz. *their crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh, and putting him to open Shame*, justifies the late exposition of our Divines, who understand them chiefly of such as openly renounce the belief of Christianity; yet there seems to be no clear reason assignable why they may not extend to those that openly renounce the practice of it by a notoriously wicked Life, after a plausible Profession of it under the highest Advantages and Helps. And the 7th. & 8th. v. give too just ground to extend them so far, for they illustrate the Apostle's Sense, by an excellent Comparison, *for the Earth that drinks in the Rain that often comes upon it, and brings forth Herbs meet for them by whom it's dressed, receives blessing from God. But that which bears Thorns and Briers is rejected, and is nigh unto Cursing, whose end is to be burnt.*

For these Words as related to the former, do at the least imply, that such as under the highest means and advantages, for the producing the genuine Fruits of Practical Christianity, and some success of them, do afterwards entirely relapse into an open course of Irreligion and Wickedness, are in a case next to hopeless and desperate. They seem not recoverable according to the ordinary methods of the Grace of God. It must be a Prerogative and a Miracle of Mercy that must prevent their Ruin. And, O what reason have those to fear lest they should sin themselves into this dismal case, who have so frequently overcome, and baffled strong Convictions; so long resisted the motions of the Spirit of God, and as it were affronted them by gratifying their Lusts, in despite of them; that now they can sin with some degree of a wretched Peace and Security; their Conscience, being almost seared, scarce feel the deepest Wounds they give them by hainous Transgressions: They that could not before sin without Clamour and Noise, can do it now without any considerable restraint or checks of their reluctant Judgments. The Dictates and Reproofs which they hear'd before, are now silenc'd. And what they would (like Hazeel *2 Kings viii. 13.*) have abhorred and trembled at before, they can now act without any inward Shame or Fear; sure if you have any Sense left at all, you cannot but observe, you have in a great measure quench'd all the Motions of the Spirit of God, and banished him from your Hearts. Did he continue to strive with you, could your Consciences be so stupified, while you are daily contracting the most aggravated Guilt by renewed acts of Intemperance, Uncleaness, Injustice, Lying, gross mispence of Time, prophanation of the Sabbath, Swearing, &c. Could you daily rush into so palpable Sins, and your Hearts never once smite you, never offer one serious Consideration or Argument, as a rub in your way, never make the least remonstrance

of the Danger you are running into? No sure; it is impossible that Conscience should be so intirely benumbed and stupified, were it not for the present intirely forsaken by the Holy Spirit.

And O! how dangerous is the state of a Soul when that blessed Spirit has abandoned it after long Struggles and Conflicts. No wonder that such are given up to a reprobate Mind, and an incorrigible impenitent Heart; to *treasure up Wrath against the day of Wrath, &c.* And no wonder that Satan regains the intire possession of those Souls whom that blessed Spirit has deserted, and fixed his full uncontrollable Dominion there; and alas how little is this considered by those desperate wretches that are arrived to such a degree of Prophaneness, as to ridicule and mock at the Operations of the Holy Spirit, which they should earnestly beg, and diligently improve: How little do they ponder those most terrible of all Threatnings, *my People would not hearken to my Voice, and Israel would none of me, So I gave them up to their own Hearts Lusts, and they walked in their own Councils,* Psal. lxxxi. 11, 12. Revel. xxii. 12. *He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still,* Gen. vi. 3. *My Spirit shall not always strive, &c.* When it once comes to this that so awful a Doom is past, it may well be said of such, *there remains no more a Sacrifice for Sin: But a certain fearful looking for of Judgment and fiery Indignation, which shall consume the Adversaries,* Heb. x. 26.

2. I would address this Discourse to such as are under those common Operations of the Holy Spirit, that tend to their sincere Conversion and Repentance. And such do highly need this Caution, that they quench not the Spirit.

Now perhaps that Holy Spirit is striving with you; he shines into your Minds with those Rays of Light that discover to you the unconceivable Evil and demerit of Sin, and the dreadful Consequences of your persisting impenitently in it: The excellency of Holiness, and the blessed Issue of it in the heavenly Glory. The suitability, and sufficiency of a Saviour, and the necessity of excepting the Offers, and complying with the designs of his Grace for your Salvation. He is now solliciting you to renounce your Transgressions with Abhorrence; to return through a Mediator to God, as your reconciled Father, and to embrace these Paths of Holiness, that lead to eternal Life.

O let not these Convictions die, but cherish them by frequent and serious Meditations till they have deeply possessed and changed your practical Judgments. Suffer not those Rays of Light to be extinguish'd by the Fumes of sensual Lusts. *Detain not the Truth of God in Unrighteousness.* Let not the noise and hurry of Worldly Business or Pleasures, silence the Dictates of an awaken'd Conscience. Follow them on by deep and intense Thoughts, and urge them by the most cogent Arguments till you feel their persuasive Force and Power.

Have these lively Motions excited any serious Purposes to yield and comply with what the Holy Spirit sollicitates you to? O let not these good Resolutions prove abortive, and become only *as the Morning Cloud, and early Dew that soon goes away,* Hos. vi. 4. Bring them by a serious deliberation to a fixed Determination and Choice that may change your Hearts, and turn the very bent of them towards God, and Holiness, and Heaven. Let them not expire in empty barren Wishes, or slight or superficial Endeavours Suffer them not to be over-born by the reluctance of the Flesh, but contend against all the opposition of a listless and disinclined Heart: Especially, extinguish'd not the Sentiments of Conscience, by running into new presumptuous Transgressions, and crush not these early Purposes, by rushing immediately into Sins that directly violate them.

To urge you hereto, consider,

1. Your Conversion is now highly probable, if you

quench not, but cherish the present Motions of the Holy Spirit.

This is the tendency, and will be the happy issue of his gracious Operations, if your wilful resistance prevent not. For the blessed God doth not vouchsafe these supernatural Aids in vain. They will either prevail to renew our Natures, or leave us inexcusable. Nor will he forsake our Souls, till they forsake him; nor will his holy Spirit abandon us, till our perverse Opposition quench his Motions, and provoke him to retire from us. And, Oh! what hopes were there of our sincere return to God, if our Souls were but by deep Consideration fitted to receive the Impressions of the holy Spirit. The Arguments that should persuade us thereto, are strong and powerful, and there is nothing reasonable can be objected against it. And would but we set ourselves to ponder them, and fix our Thoughts upon them, how quickly would the Holy Spirit assist our Minds, and represent the great things that concern our Duty and our Happiness, in a clear, convincing Light! How easily can he conquer the aversion of a backward Heart, and render it pliable to the will of God! How soon can he knock off the Fetters of Sin, and rescue our captivated Souls from that wretched Bondage, and restore them to the liberty of the Children of God! What a fair prospect is there of our sincere Repentance, if we do not now harden our Hearts, and deafen our Ears, but open both to his Instructions and Counsels! And how just is it, that we should contribute our utmost in the use of our reasonable Powers towards our own Recovery, and not expect to be treated as Stocks and Stones, as lifeless and insensible Creatures, in the great work of our Conversion! To what end does God command us to *make to ourselves a new Heart, and a new Spirit, and cast away our Transgressions,* Ezek. xviii. 31. if there be nothing to be done on our part towards it in the use of suitable means.

2. The longer you continue to quench the holy Spirit by neglect or resistance of his holy Motions, your Conversion becomes the more difficult, and you endanger more being forsaken by him.

Your Conversion becomes the more difficult: Corrupt Inclinations gain more irresistible Power, by trampling on the Convictions of Conscience, and bearing down slight and unstable Resolutions. Continuance in Sin increases the enmity of our Natures against the blessed God, and his holy Laws and Government; and aggravated Guilt, disposes the more to flee from God in a secret despair of Mercy and Pardon from him; and we provoke the Holy Spirit the more to depart from us.

Res delicata Spiritus Sanctus. Every time we stifle those holy Truths that should reclaim us from a life of Sin, and excite us to our Duty; every time we reject his inward Persuasions thereto, we grieve him. He resents our perverse Carriage; and we have great reason to fear, if we persist to do so, he will shew his Resentments of it, by abandoning our Souls to the rage and violence of those corrupt Inclinations, which we cherish in a wretched opposition to his heavenly Suggestions and Dictates. And, O how dark and desolate an Habitation, nay, what a sink of unclean Thoughts and Affections would these Hearts be, if once the Holy Spirit should intirely desert them!

But this leads me to add,

3. The Case of such as after good Impressions made on them, tending to Conversion, revolt to an open course of Sin by quenching the Holy Spirit, is most deplorable.

And yet such a dreadful Apostacy is like to be the consequence, if by our extinguishing those Impressions, we banish the Holy Spirit from us.

These Words should be read by such of us with holy Fear and Trembling. If after they have escaped the pollutions of the World, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have

have known the way of Righteousness, than after they have known it to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered to them. But 'tis happened to them according to the true Proverb; the Dog is turned to his own Vomit again, and the Sow that is wash'd to her wallowing in the Mire, 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21, 22. See all to the same purpose, the Parable of the Man out of whom one unclean Spirit went forth, but returned with seven more wicked than himself, Mat. 12. 43, 44, 45. Of whom it's observed, His last State was worse than his first.—Review what was said to hardened Sinners.

O cherish then the Holy Spirit! bring your Souls as tender Wax, ready to receive his Stamp and Impression; bring a teachable mind to his Instructions; and a tractable Heart to his Counsels. Implore and improve those divine Influences, which would renew and transform your Nature, entertain those heavenly Rays and Sparks that should enflame your Hearts with love to God and Holiness, consume your Drofs, and refine your Souls to an aimable conformity to the Divine Nature and Will.

3. I should address myself to the truly Regenerate.

And it's far from being a needless Caution, even to such that they quench not the Spirit; or rather 'tis to such principally that the Apostle here directs it.

And as the caution may be justly extended both to the Gifts and the Graces of the Holy Spirit, so what I should say to such will fall under these two Heads.

First, *How far may the truly Regenerate quench the Holy Spirit?*

Secondly, *What should we do or avoid, that we may not quench it?*

First, *How far may the truly Regenerate quench the Holy Spirit.*

I the rather propose this Question, because it may seem strange that they should be cautioned against it; and the due resolution of the Question, will furnish us with proper Motives to enforce this necessary Caution.

But the time will only allow me briefly to suggest those Heads which should be enlarged on.

Even the Regenerate may quench the Spirit.

First; *As to their Graces.* For,

1. *Holy Habits and Dispositions may be dreadfully weakened, and contrary Habits gain considerable Strength.*

By neglecting to beg and improve the illuminations of the Holy Spirit, their degrees of Knowledge may be extremely low, and their Faith itself may be exceedingly clouded, so that it cannot realize the great Truths of Religion; and give them those lively heart-affecting apprehensions of them, which they had before. It may be sadly enfeebled by troublesome Doubts, that will render our Conceptions of divine and spiritual Objects in a great measure dark, conjectural and lifeless; the too great prevalency of the inordinate Love of this World, may occasion so wretched a remissness of our Love to God, that our Affections will not ascend to him, with that frequency and that vigour as sometimes they had done: And alas! how often does the love of sensual Delights so damp our Affections towards Heaven, that our Desires and Hopes of it become comparatively faint and languid, cold and indifferent! The same might be added as to other Graces.

And, alas! how dreadfully is the Spirit of God quench'd, when these holy Fruits of it are in so declining and wither'd state, when it's divine Impressions are almost raised out; when holy Principles are but as a Spark covered with Ashes, scarce able to overcome what tends to suppress it, and ready to expire and die.

2. *Nay, the Holy Spirit may be so far quench'd in the regenerate, as that there may be, for the present, a dreadful intermission of holy Actions.*

How awful an Instance is David hereof? 2 Sam. xi., xii chap. How did all the Sentiments of his Con-

science seem suppress'd, and all holy Dispositions dormant, when he could proceed from the sin of Adultery, to that of premeditated Murder: And continue so long under the Guilt of both, before his Conscience seem'd thoroughly awakened, and oppos'd. Grace did any thing considerable towards his recovery from so dismal a Fall. There are also many secret and less observable Intermissions of the exercise of our Graces: I wish it may not be too justly said of too many of us, that we often spend days together with very few lively admiring Thoughts of God, or ardent Breathings of holy Affections towards him. There are many sad Interruptions and Chasms in our holy Obedience. Our divine Principles seem often asleep, dull, and unactive, and the Law in our Members seems to captivate the Law of our Minds. Our Spirits are quite fettered and bound up, instead of being enlarged in our Duty.

And how does this argue our having, in a great Degree quench'd the Holy Spirit, when his vital Influences seem, for the present, interrupted or suspended, and it can scarce be discerned by any vital Actions of holiness in our own Souls, whether there be a principle of Divine Life there.

3. *And no doubt all the Consolations of the holy Spirit may be intercepted.*

It cannot be well otherwise, when our Graces dreadfully decline, and there is so woful an Intermission of the exercise of them. 'Tis no wonder that in that case there is almost a total extinction of all joy, and our Comforts are eclips'd, as our Graces are darken'd. How should the Holy Spirit witness our Adoption, when the Characters of the Children of God, are so little discernable in us, and we act so unsuitably to our relation to him? How should he revivify us with the prospect of our heavenly Inheritance, when we have contracted so wretched an unsuitableness and indisposition in our Temper to it; and have done so much to blot all our Evidences for it? No, alas! we may sin our selves into so disconsolate Dolefulness, as to have all Rays of divine Favour intercepted. We may be reduc'd to fearful Perplexities about our own State, such as will cost us deep Agonies and Conflicts, the Torments of broken or disjointed Bones, the restless pain and smart of a wounded Spirit. So this in David, Psal. li. 8, v. 11, 12. and alas it's too common with us to sin our selves into very uncomfortable Doubts, so that as the Evidences of our Sinfulness, are but weak and dubious, so our Joys are but at a low Ebb.

And how must the holy Spirit be quench'd by us, when there is such a suspension of those Comforts, which 'tis one part of his Office to communicate, and diffuse into the Hearts of all the Children of God.

2. *As to the Gifts of the Holy Spirit.*

These also may be by our Negligence abated in a considerable Degree, and the abatement of them may consequently render us less useful in our Station to the Glory of God, and the service of his Church, and deprive us of the Comfort that should arise hence. Proceed we to the

2. Question, *what should we do or avoid that we may not quench the Holy Spirit.*

Answer. According to what was suggested in the explication of the Caution.—1. *In respect of our Graces.*

1. *Let us keep up a constant Course of those Holy Duties, wherein we may especially expect the influences of the Holy Spirit, to excite and improve holy Dispositions in us.*

And here I would particularly recommend these two.

Secret Meditation.

'Tis in this Duty that the Holy Spirit does most intimately converse with, and has the freest access to our Spirits.

Our own serious and retired Thoughts, are the great means he makes use of, to cast our Souls into a holy

a holy heavenly Mold; and herein he acts most agreeably to our reasonable Nature, and the excellent Powers of it.

While we are calling up our own Minds to the Contemplation of Divine and Spiritual Objects, while we are pondering what the Gospel reveals to us concerning the excellent Nature of the Blessed God, and the glorious Designs of his Wisdom and Grace, concerning our Incarnate Redeemer, and the admirable Constitution and Administration of his Kingdom of Grace, and the blessed Issues of it in the heavenly State, while we are considering our Duty in Compliance with the Offers of Divine Grace, and our high Expectations and Hopes from it, &c. The Holy Spirit shines in with clearer Light, and elevates our Minds to more lively and affecting Thoughts of the great Things we do believe. We see a greater Excellency and Lustre in Divine Truths, and we feel more warm and vigorous Impressions of them upon our Hearts.

We are more taken up in the Admiration of Divine Perfections, especially of the infinite Wisdom and Love, Holiness and Justice of God, as they shine out in the Methods of his Government over fallen Mankind, thro' a Mediator.

While we are reflecting on the infinite Love of God, in sending his own Son on so merciful an Errand, and his ineffable Condescension and Love in all he has done and suffered for our Salvation, our Hearts are inflam'd with the highest Fervours of Love to our God and Saviour, and holy Praises become even the Pulse and Breath of our Souls.

While we are contemplating the Evil of Sin, our Hearts are more confirmed in their Abhorrence of it, and contract more of a holy Antipathy against it. While we are beholding the Glory of Holiness, our Souls are ravish'd with the Beauty of it, and feel its attractive Power, so as the Practice of it becomes the most delightful Study and Employment of our Lives.

While we are looking into the heavenly Canaan with the Help of that Divine Prospective Glass, the Promises of the Gospel, we still discover more of the Glories of the World above, to enkindle in us more ardent Desires and more vigorous Pursuits after that heavenly State. In a Word, while we muse, the holy Fire is enkindled, and our Souls feel a Divine Warmth as it were, diffusing it self through all their Powers, *Psal. xxxix. 3.*

While the holy Spirit is as it were communing with us in the secret Language of our own Minds, as enlighten'd by the Word of God. How often have we occasion to reflect, as the two Disciples, *Luke xxiv. 32. Did not our Hearts burn within us?* We are then fittest to receive and cherish all Rays of Divine Light, and attend to all the Arguments and Motives by which he urges our Duty on us, and to perceive the persuasive Force and Weight of them.

And it's owing to the sad Neglect of this Duty, or our being less frequent and diligent in it, that we are advanced to no higher Degrees of Holiness by the Spirit our Sanctifier, and receive no larger Communications of Divine Light and Life, Love and Joy from him.

And no Wonder that those Divine Objects should so little affect us, which we so little converse with, or, that we feel so little the Power of the great things we believe, when we so rarely impress them on our own Hearts, by deep and attentive Consideration.

And no Wonder the Holy Spirit should suspend those Divine Influences which we so little value, that we will not find Time and Leisure for them, and put our own Spirits in the most suitable Posture and Frame to receive and entertain them.

2. Secret Prayer is another Duty requisite to our receiving and improving the Influences of the Holy Spirit.

'Tis in that Duty especially, that the Holy Spirit acts in us, as the Spirit of Adoption, and excites in us all those Affections which should breathe in the Hearts of the Children of God, towards their Heavenly Father; see *Rom. viii. 15.* compared with the 26th ver. And those Graces which Meditation does excite, do most properly vent themselves in our fervent Addresses unto God. 'Tis in such secret Addresses that our particular Repentance and Sorrow for our particular Offences, that our Gratitude and Love for the peculiar Mercies of God, that our Submission and Resignation to his Disposal, that our Trust and Confidence in his Conduct, that our steady Belief of his Promises, and vigorous Hope of their Accomplishment, and that our entire Devotedness to his Interest, and Zeal for his Glory, are the most sensibly exercised and heightened.

And in that Duty we usually find the most warm and powerful Impressions, and Aids of the Divine Spirit to enlarge our Hearts, and raise these Graces to higher Vigour and Strength.

And as in Prayer we breathe out our earnest Desires after the higher Communications of Divine Grace; so that Duty puts us in the most suitable Temper to receive them, when they are vouchsaf'd as the Return of Prayer. We do, as it were, receive them as Supplicants on our Knees, and consequently most sensibly feel and own our Obligations to the Holy Spirit for all the Progress and Advances we make in our holy, heavenly Life towards Life Eternal.

How careful should we then be, that we quench not the Holy Spirit by restraining Prayer! And the Context does fully justify this particular Caution against the Neglect of this particular Duty; for the Apostle having enjoined our *praying without ceasing, and our giving thanks in all things*; (and the latter Duty I would here include in the former,) he immediately adds, *Quench not the Spirit, q. d.* Do not by the rare or cold Performance of these Duties, extinguish the Divine Fire which Prayer does supply the Fuel of, and gives the highest advantage to enkindle Flames of Divine Love and Gratitude in our Hearts. And how can we expect the Holy Spirit should convey higher Degrees of Light and Holiness, when we scarce think them worth our importunate Desires? Or that he should enliven those holy Affections which we stifle and suppress, by so frequent Suppression of this Duty, which is so deservedly called the *Breath of Regenerate Souls.*

O! let us not then be so great Strangers to the daily and frequent Discharge of these two Duties, as we would not be Strangers to those larger Effusions of the Spirit of God, which so many pious Souls have happily experienc'd and express'd, in an eminently lively and useful Life! Let not our wretched Sloath and Laziness forfeit those Divine Influences, which we will not diligently seek, in the Use of these prescribed (and most suitable) Means. And methinks, we that have sometimes felt the Efficacy of these Duties, when the Holy Spirit has enlarged our Hearts in them, and their happy Effects on our Temper and Life, should be more constant in them, that thereby we may be as it were found in the Road of Divine Grace.

But,

2. Let us diligently observe and live up to the present Dictates and Motions of the Holy Spirit.

If it be enquired, how we shall know and distinguish the Dictates and Motions of the Spirit of God from the Suggestions of the Tempter? I answer:

All the internal Dictates and Motions of the Spirit of God must be measured by his external Doctrines and Precepts already revealed in the Holy Scriptures. We have, and we need no other Rule to judge of them by. Whatever thy own Conscience, when thou art in the most serious Temper, does urge thee

to, and that agreeably to the revealed Will of God, That and that alone may'st thou regard, as a Dictate and Motion of his Holy spirit: For it's the great Design of the Holy Spirit, in his internal Operations on our Souls, to guide our Minds to clearer Apprehensions of what he has already made known by his inspired Penmen, the Prophets and Apostles, to engrave these Laws on our Hearts, which are recorded in these excellent Writings.

And to pretend to any Dictates of the Holy Spirit, which are not agreeable to those divine Oracles, is to expose our selves to the Delusions of Satan, or our own heated and abused Fancies. In all these Inquiries, we must have Recourse to the *Law and to the Testimonies of God*; for if they speak not according to these, 'tis because there is no Light in them, Isa. viii. 20.

Now let us carefully observe, and faithfully comply with the present Dictates and Motions of the Holy Spirit.

Let us readily entertain Divine Truths, how cross soever to our sensual Inclinations or worldly Interest; let us *come to the Light*, and not suffer any corrupt Affections to prepossess our Minds with sinful Prejudices against it, *John iii. 21*. Let us give up our Understandings to the Conduct of the Holy Spirit, who has promised to lead us into all (necessary) Truth, and receive the Truth in the Love of it. Let's not content our selves with the bare empty Speculation of the great Doctrines of the Gospel, but turn them into Practical Principles; and endeavour to act up to the Light of a well instructed Conscience. Let's give Divine Revelation a transforming Power and Virtue, by our serious Belief of it. Let's impartially endeavour to understand the Will of God, that we may obey it.

Does the Holy Spirit solicit and move us to our Duty? Let's readily obey the Motion. Let's not dispute his Counsels, or consult with Flesh and Blood, whether we should follow them or no, *Gal. i. 16*. Let's not put off the Execution of what he dictates with frivolous Excuses or tedious Delays: Let's up with our Sails while we have now a favourable Gale, and blow up the holy Flame, whilst that Heavenly Fire supplies us with new Heat and Warmth. Let's attend to the Voice behind us, when it directs our Way, and diligently set about whatever that blessed Monitor within prompts us to.

'Tis the very Character of the Children of God, that they are led by the Spirit, and walk after the Spirit, see *Rom. viii. 1*, and *14*. Let's not indulge, but contend against all the unreasonable Reluctancy of a backward disinclined Heart. Let's not put off his Exhortations with slight Resolves and ineffectual Purposes, but engage in our present Duty (to which he is now persuading us) with holy Vigour and Fervency. For alas! how often do we quench the Holy Spirit, and render his Motions ineffectual by indulging the wretched Sluggishness of a listless and indisposed Mind, and deferring our Duty to a pretendedly fitter Season (like Felix when Paul had awakened his Conscience, *Acts xxiv, xxv*).

But,

2. *We must especially beware of Quenching the Spirit by resisting or counteracting his gracious Influences.*

To that End we must chiefly beware of all deliberate and presumptuous Transgressions, *Psal. xix. 30*. all wilful Omissions of known Duty, or Commission of known Sins, against the Light of Conscience, and the Checks of the Holy Spirit. Such Sins give a deep Wound to our Spiritual Life: They cast the very Principles of it (I mean the Graces of the Holy Spirit) into a languishing Swoon; they sadly weaken our holy Resolutions, and almost revive the Strength, and recover the Force of our mortified Corruptions. Grace looks as if it were dormant and captivated, and

Sin seems to have re-ascended the Throne: Such Sins also make a sad Breach and Interruption in our Obedience, and, for the present, quite dam up the Stream of it; and no Wonder that they eclipse the Light of Divine Favour, and banish all Divine Joys and Hopes. And well may they produce these dismal Effects, when they provoke the Holy Spirit to suspend his Influences of Grace and Comfort.

For, how can it be expected, that the Holy Spirit should still strive, while we so obstinately oppose? that he should blow up these Flames which we are throwing Water upon? when 'tis the Language of the Holy Spirit, *Do not this abominable thing which I hate*; and yet, at the Beck of some wretched Passion, or Lust, we will do it?

No Wonder that he resents the Affront, and leaves those at present to themselves, who thus wilfully open their Ears to the Suggestions of the Tempter, and deafen them against his Counsels. O! let us then reverence the Dictates of the Holy Spirit, and not dare to offer any such cursed Violence to them. Let's not by wilful Inconsideration reject those Arguments which the Holy Spirit suggests to restrain us from Sinning. Nay, let's be more fearful of going against the Suspicions and Jealousies of an awakened Conscience.

Let's not dare to act against the Doubts and Fears of a misgiving Mind, that what we are about to do is displeasing to God, lest we thereby weaken his Authority in our own Consciences, *Rom. xiv*. and the last Verse. *Whatsoever is not Faith is Sin*, i. e. Whatever we do while we are not persuaded of, but rather suspect and question the Lawfulness of it.

But especially, *Let's beware of such Sins as more directly oppose and counteract the Influences of the Holy Spirit, such as cross the chief Design and Tendency of his gracious Operations.*

For Instance,

1. He is a Spirit of Light, whose great Office it is to diffuse the Light of Divine Knowledge into our Minds, which shall gradually spring up to perfect eternal Day.

Let's beware of quenching him by a proud Understanding, that will not submit to what he has plainly revealed, and not content to be a Discerner, would become a *Peremptory Judge* of his Revelations. Justly may the Holy Spirit leave those to dangerous Errors, who will not follow his Guidance, and rely on the Testimony of infinite Truth, but are ready to reject any Doctrine how clearly soever it be asserted in the Holy Scriptures, if their shallow Reason cannot fully comprehend it, or resolve all the Difficulties that relate to it. Not that any Part of the Divine Revelation is contrary to any true Principles of Reason; tho' several Mysteries are so sublime, that as our Reason could never have found them out, so when discovered it cannot fully pierce into the Depth of them.

And no Wonder that we who can so little comprehend how our own Souls are united to these Bodies, or how they make use of bodily Organs in their various Operations, (tho' we cannot doubt of their doing so) should be as little able to discern into the manner how the Divine Nature should have a three-fold distinct Mode of Subsistence, or be by an admirable Fœcundity Three in One. Or how the eternal Word should assume our Nature into so near and inseparable Union with his own. And from this Arrogance of an unhumbl'd Mind, all the Socinian Errors (the Contagion whereof seems to spread itself to a strange Degree in this Age) too evidently spring.

Let's beware also of Quenching the Holy Spirit, by secret Unbelief of the great and fundamental Principles of Christianity. Infidelity has dangerously diffused itself even in this Kingdom, notwithstanding all the excellent Writings that have opposed it, and the best

best of us have need to be armed against the poisonous Influence of it: Then only may we expect high Degrees of Divine Knowledge; when we both bring a teachable Mind to the Oracles of God, inquiring into them in a humble dependance on the illumination of the Holy Spirit, and when we come with a due Reverence of the Authority and Truth of God, ready to yield a full Assent to whatever we are convinced he has revealed.

And when our Judgments are settled in the Belief of the Holy Scripture upon clear and impartial Search, let's not give way to every Doubt, that Satan may suggest, or every Objection that a vain Caviller may cast in our way.

2. The Holy Spirit is also a Spirit of Love, and that Divine Nature which he communicates to the Children of God, is chiefly made up of Love to God, and Love to one another. 'Tis these Holy Flames which that sacred refining Fire does especially kindle in our Hearts.

Let's beware of quenching the Spirit by extinguishing these holy Flames of Love to God, and to that end let's chiefly beware of the inordinate Love of this World. So far as that recovers any thing of it's former Strength, it does proportionably abate the Degrees of our Love to God, and is like so much Water cast on that holy Fire, see 1 Job. ii. 15. ver. James iv. 4. v. When this World doth in too great a Measure, engross our Thoughts and Time; when our Cares about it are too intense and vehement.

When we begin to place too much of our Countenance and Happiness in these sensible Enjoyments, and have too strong a relish of them; How do we quench the lively Spirit, whose great design is to crucify us to this World, that our inordinate Affections to it being dead, they may ascend with frequency and fervour unto God, as the Fountain of our Happiness, and fix in him as the Center of our Everlasting Rest? How cautious then should we be against any dangerous Competitions of this World with God, for the Sovereignty of our Esteem and Choice, our Desire and Delight? Let's beware of so debasing our Affections, by suffering them to sink into this Earth, as will clog them whenever they should freely mount up on the Wings of ardent Desire towards God and Heaven.

Let's beware of quenching the Holy Spirit, by quenching those Flames of holy Love to all, so far as they bear any thing of the Image of our heavenly Father. To that end, let's beware of all those irregular Passions and bitter Animosities that have a pernicious Tendency to weaken or extinguish Divine Love.

And alas! how little do the most of Christians consider, how much they do to quench the Holy Spirit, (who is a Spirit of Unity and Love,) by the unchristian Violence and Discord wherewith they manage their otherwise very inconsiderable Differences; it was never the design of the Spirit of God, to bring all the Members of Christ's mystical Body to an exact Uniformity in unnecessary Opinions and Practices; But to bring them to an Unity in the great Essentials of Faith and Holiness, and thereby to cement them in the Bonds of mutual Love. And to this Design, all the numerous Precepts that relate to Unity, Peace and Love, are plainly calculated and suited. How do we then counteract it, when all the little Differences of Judgment or Practice (wherein the Interest of Faith and Holiness have little or no Concern,) become the Engines of Satan to divide our Affections, and set us at an unreasonable Distance from one another: When accordingly those Differences are pursued with uncharitable Judgment, unreasonable Suspicions, unjust Censures, or reviling Language, concerning one another? How grievous must that be to the Holy Spirit, that dwells in all the Children of God, to inspire them with the Charity, that should rather express itself by pitying the Ignorance,

condescending to the Weakness, and bearing the infirmities of our Brethren, by putting the most favourable Construction on their Words and Actions, by esteeming whatever we discern of the Image of our Lord in them, and improving the far greater Things wherein we agree, as a sufficient Foundation, for mutual Love and Communion.

3. He is also a Spirit of Holiness and Purity; Let's then beware of quenching the Holy Spirit, by giving the least indulgence to sensual Lusts.

'Tis the great Design and Office of the Holy Spirit, to mortify in us the Deeds of the Flesh. And therefore the Flesh and the Spirit are opposed as contrary Principles by which we are acted, or contrary Masters, the one of whom we serve and obey. See Rom. viii. 1. 13, &c. 'Tis his great Work to spiritualize our Natures, and thereby to suit us to those Exercises and Duties of Religion which are spritual and heavenly, and enable us to relish the spritual and solid Pleasure of them.

What then can we do, that will more dangerously tend to quench the Holy Spirit than to pamper this Flesh, and gratify it's inordinate Affections and Desires, which by the assistance of the Holy Spirit, we should daily crucify? And how do all degrees of Intemperance, Lasciviousness, Pride, Luxury and Sensuality, tend to cloud our Reason, corrupt our Imagination, degrade our Affections, and so brutify our Souls, as to indispose them for whatever is holy or heavenly?

The Flesh will struggle against the Spirit, and the Lusts thereof war against our Souls, by opposing his Motions, Gal. v. 17. 1 Pet. ii. 11. And how shou'd these Minds be fit to entertain the Divine Light when darkened with the Fumes of Lust? Or how shou'd they attend to his Motions, under the conduct and hurry of brutish Inclinations? Or how shou'd the Holy Spirit abide in a Soul polluted with impure Thoughts and vile Desires? O let us then subdue this Rebel Flesh, bring these Bodies into subjection, mortify and check every irregular Desire and Inclination, as ever we wou'd preserve these Souls and Bodies as an acceptable Temple for the holy Spirit to dwell in, who will never make an impure brutified Nature, his Habitation and Residence.

Lastly, he is a Spirit of Consolation and Joy.

'Tis one great part of his Office to diffuse Divine Joy into our Hearts, and maintain it as the Seed and the Fore-taste of eternal Joys.

O let us beware of counteracting this great Design, either by our sinful Fears and Despondency on the one Hand, or by any excess of carnal Mirth on the other!

Let's not indulge those unreasonable and endless Fears, which spring from the injurious Thoughts of God and his Goodness; and thereby rob us of those Comforts to which it's the great design of the Holy Spirit to raise us to in a Course of holy Obedience. And alas! how many sincere Christians have need to be warned of this, whose Life is almost entirely made up of Complaints and Doubts? As if this were the great design and end of their Christian Profession: Such shou'd consider, that their Sorrow for Sin itself, is no farther required by God, than it tends to divorce their Hearts from it, and prepare them for the thankful Sense of pardoning Mercy. That 'tis a great dishonour to God, either to question the truth of his Promises made to all returning Sinners, or not to rejoyce in a state of Pardon and Salvation, when his Grace has given us an Interest in it.

That it's a great Wrong to our own Souls, when we have upon impartial Self-tryal found just Grounds to conclude the sincerity of our Repentance and Obedience, to call it into doubt upon every unreasonable Scruple, where some deliberate Sin, or visible declension in Grace, does not give occasion for just Suspicion; that it's the great Office of the Holy Spirit, to witness our Adoption, and thereby enable us to conclude,

clude, that we are *Heirs of God*, and *Cob heirs with our Lord Jesus*; that the sense of so glorious Privileges may shed abroad in us a more fervent Love to God, and enable us to rejoyce more in his infinite and unconceivable Love, *Rom. viii. 16, 17, &c.*

Let's also beware of quenching the Spirit by all Excesses of carnal Mirth.

The Joys of the Spirit of God; are the result of our most serious Thoughts (*Res severa verum gaudium*;) and are not to be found in the Tumult and Noise of sensual Jollity.

A Mind possest with Froth and Vanity, is incapable of those Divine Consolations, which the lively view of spiritual and heavenly Objects does give.

And I would take this Occasion to reflect on the common Custom of this Age, in making all our Conferences a meer Entertainment of Wit and Fancy. I fear 'tis not sufficiently observed, how pernicious an Influence this Custom has had, not only to banish every thing that's serious, out of the Discourses of the prophaner sort of Men, as if it were rude and unfashionable in Conversation: But I wish I might not say to extinguish almost the serious Spirit of practical Religion amongst the sincere Professors of it. What need had we to beware, that our cheerfulness degenerate not into a sinful Levity, and that the Innocent pleasantness of Wit (which shou'd only serve to recommend holy and useful Discourse, as Sauce does our Meat,) turns not into what the Apostle justly warns us of, under the Name of *foolish Talking or Jestings*, *Eph. v. 4.* or a scurrilous and airy Buffoonery.

Nor does excess of bodily Pleasures, less tend to damp our holy Affections, and indispose us to relish those Joys of the Holy Spirit, which are of a purer and more refined Nature. There is so little suitability bewixt sensitive and spiritual Delights, that all immoderacy in the Former, strangely allays the sense of the Latter. And sensitive Delights are then only safe, when intirely subordinated to spiritual Ends and Purposes: as when the streams of divine Love we taste in temporal Mercies, leads us unto God: Or when bodily Diversions renew the vigour of our Souls for his Service, in which alone our truest and most solid Delight is to be found: And no wonder the Holy Spirit shou'd nor communicate Divine Joys to those who wou'd not trample these of Sense under their Feet, to partake of them.

But,

2dly, In respect of our Gifts, we must beware of quenching the Holy Spirit: And that either,

1. *By not depending on his Assistance in our Endeavours to acquire them, and in the continued use of them.*

There are various Gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed by his Blessing on our use of the ordinary Means for acquiring them, as Reading, Meditation, &c. Such Gifts as make us capable of being more eminently useful, in a more private and publick Station, such as qualify us to instruct the Ignorant, reclaim the Impenitent, comfort the distressed, resolve the Doubting, &c. The Gift of Prayer, which as distinguish'd from the Grace, is an ability of readily representing our Desires to God on every emergent Occasion, in suitable becoming Expressions, &c.

Now as every such Gift does capacitate us according to the measure of it, for being more serviceable to the Body of Christ, whereof we are Members; and as we shou'd accordingly covet such spiritual Gifts, in order to our being so useful in our Sphere and Place; so we must beware of all Pride, and Self-confidence, in all our Studies to attain them, and in our daily Exercise of them. This may provoke the Holy Spirit to deny his Assistance and Blessing, when we do not humbly implore and rely on it.

Let us beware also of quenching the Holy Spirit.

2dly, *By our negligence to exercise and improve our Gifts.*

Holy Industry may increase the number of our Talents, and the Holy Spirit will ordinarily impart the richest Gifts to those that are most diligent in laying them out for the Service of their Lord and Master: Whereas, Sloathfulness may even forfeit the Talents we have, and the Holy Spirit may suffer these Gifts to be abated or lost, which we imploy not to the great Ends for which they were given, the Edification of the Church, *Mat. xiii. 10. Luke xix. 26.*

And alas! how often do the Gifts, both of private Christians and Ministers, like the Vessels of the Temple, contract rust by Laziness and Disuse? Whereas, holy Exercise wou'd brighten them, and keep them in their Vigour. How observable is this with reference to the Gift of Prayer, some having so long confined themselves to Crutches, (as the Reverend Doctor Wilkins called Forms of Prayer,) that they cannot go without them?

Let us beware also of quenching the Spirit,

3dly, *By prostituting those Gifts to the Service of any sinful Passion.*

It provokes the Holy Spirit to withdraw his Assistance in the Exercise of them, when they are used for Ostentation. or to gratify our vain Glory.

When we only hunt after Applause by them, or when our Parts and Abilities, are only imployed to support some secular Interest, and serve the ends of our Ambition and Avarice. When those Gifts that shou'd render us useful Instruments, to enlarge the Kingdom of our Lord Jesus; and propagate the great Interest of practical Christianity and Godliness are perverted, to advance the corrupt Designs of a degenerate Party, or at least to proselyte Men to the unnecessary Opinions and Practices of it. When our Abilities are only used to serve the Cause of Error or Sin, or of Passions or Animosities against the Cause of Truth and Holiness, Concord and Love.

This may justly provoke the Holy Spirit to bereave us of the Talents we so grossly abuse, or to blast those Abilities which we turn as Arms against him, to whose Service they should be entirely consecrated.

And thus you have heard what you must do or avoid, that you may not quench the Holy Spirit.

What has been suggested before concerning the sad Effects of our quenching the Holy Spirit, may be received to supply us with Motives to enforce this solemn Caution.

And one wou'd think our own Experience of them should give them the deeper Edge.

We that have often had so sad Occasion to reflect on the desolate state of our Souls, when deserted for a while by the Spirit of God, shou'd beware of quenching his Holy Motions. How dismal has our Case been, when all our holy Resolutions have been overborn by the present hurry of Temptation, and the violence of corrupt Inclinations? When our Graces have been as it were bound up or cast into a deep Sleep? When we have found little or no Disposition to any spiritual and heavenly Duties? And less of any holy Warmth, or Vigour in the Performance of them.

When the Sense of our Declensions, and perhaps some agravated Guilt has filled us with perplexing Fears, so that we could not draw nigh to God with any ingenuous Confidence and Hope, but were almost ready in a sinful Despondence to flee from his Presence, and restrain Prayer before him? When a black Cloud has overshadowed our Minds, so that we could scarce discern any Glympe of Divine Favour? Sure this was a deplorable Condition. And yet alas! how often is all this the sad Consequence of our quenching the Holy Spirit?

On the contrary, the blessed Effects which his gracious Influences have sometimes produced in our Souls, should excite us to cherish and improve them with the greatest Diligence.

How

How lively and affecting Apprehensions of the great Things of Religion, has he often raised our Minds to? What ardours of Divine Love has he sometimes shed abroad in our Hearts, by impressing them with the Sense of his infinite Love? With what Strength and Vigour have our Affections sometimes ascended towards Heaven, when inflamed in the Duties of Religion?

How have we sometimes had our Hearts enlarged to run the way of God's Commands, and found our Obedience, our Pleasure and Delight? What ravishing Joys has the lively Prospect of the future Glory sometimes diffused through our Souls; so that we have been with *Moses on Mount Pisgab*, with the heavenly

Canaan in our View, and thought ourselves as it were in the very Suburbs of the new *Jerusalem*? And that we find not these blessed Effects of the Holy Spirit in a more considerable Degree, is owing either to our perverseness in counteracting, or our sloath in not improving his Motions. For did we instead of quenching them continually cherish them, and act up to them, how would that blessed Spirit delight in the Communications of his Grace to us? To what eminent Degrees of Divine Light and Life, Purity and Joy would he raise us here, (of which we want not many excellent Instances, even on this Earth) as a Pledge and Seed of the Perfections and Blessedness, reserved for us in a happy Immortality.

A SERMON preach'd before the Societies for Reformation in DUBLIN. Jan. 6. 1697-8.

To the Societies for Reformation in DUBLIN.

AS this Sermon was Preach'd at your Request, so since you have thought the Publication of it might be useful to promote the Success of that Excellent Work you are engaged in, I have herein also comply'd with your Desire. For tho' I am very sensible how far so mean a Discourse falls beneath the Dignity and Importance of so great a Subject, and how little Credit or Advantage your Pious Undertaking can derive from the recommendation of so inconsiderable a Name; yet I have too hearty an Affection to this blessed Cause, to be backward in contributing my utmost (tho' but a small Mite) towards the Advancement of it. But I greatly rejoyce that there are some do espouse it, the Eminency of whose Character and Station renders me capable of giving greater Reputation and Encouragement to it. As to this Discourse, I have, upon the Review of it, observed, That something might have been added to vindicate the present Method of convicting one sort of Offenders from the Censures 'tis too commonly loaded with. But having more fully offer'd something to that purpose in another Discourse (viz. Concerning prophane Swearing and Cursing) then the Limits of my Time wou'd allow in this Sermon, I must refer the Reader thither. For yourselves 'tis Matter of great Satisfaction and Joy to all that wish well to your worthy Design to find the Regularity of your Methods in executing it, so answerable to the real Excellency of it. For I have as yet heard of no well grounded Complaints of any illegal Steps you have taken, or of any that can justly pretend to have suffer'd by any false Informations. I doubt not you will continue the same Exactness and Care in all your future Proceedings; and give none the least Ground to charge you with going beyond the Bounds of the Laws of Man in your Zeal to suppress the Violation of the Laws of God. And since your Enterprize is so truly Religious and your Management of it so unexceptionably fair, I am not without Hope that this Discourse may convince some, that have hitherto contented themselves with only wishing well to it, of their indispensable Obligation to join with you, and become more active to it, according to their Capacity and Opportunities of being serviceable to it. And there is the greater need of a considerable Addition to your Numbers, because your Zeal must not be confin'd to this City while this necessary Work

Work is so woefully and generally neglected in other Parts of the Kingdom. For it will require your utmost united Interest and Application to engage so many in this Design as may be capable of setting it on Foot in most of our populous Towns. And yet till that be done, you cannot expect the Reformation will be General and truly National; So that without this, there will be great Danger lest those Vices that seem now like a routed and flying Enemy, should again rally their Forces, and at last defeat all your hopeful Attempts for the crushing of them. Let then the present Satisfaction of your being so highly serviceable to the undoubted Interest of the Blessed Lord; Let the View of his own bright Example, of whom it was so justly said, That the zeal of God's House had eaten him up; Let the certain Prospect of a future and glorious Recompence; Nay, let the Consideration of that gracious Providence of God, that has hitherto smil'd upon your Endeavours, and given you the Comfort of beholding already so happy Effect of them, reconcile you to all the continued Hardship and Self-denial, the Difficulties and Toil of so great an Undertaking. Be not weary of well-doing, but prosecute this glorious Work with an unshaken Resolution and persevering Constancy, till your great End be attain'd, till the Interest of Religion and Virtue triumph over that of Irreligion and Vice, and these publick Sins become as unfashionable and rare as they are detestable and pernicious. And that the Great God whose Cause you so strenuously continue to maintain, may unite your Hearts in the firmest Bonds of mutual Love, That he may prosper your pious Endeavours with more remarkable success here, and crown them hereafter with his Heavenly Reward, is the hearty Prayer of,

Your unfeigned Well Wisher,

J. B.



S E R M O N

S E R M O N XXXI.

Preach'd Before the Societies for Reformati-
on, Jan. 6. 1697, 8.

Nehemiah 13. Ver. 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22,

15. In those Days saw I in Judah some treading Wine Presses on the Sabbath, and bringing in Sheaves, and lading Asses; as also Wines, Grapes and Figs; and all manner of Burdens which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day; and I testify'd against them in the Day wherein they sold Victuals.

16. There dwelt Men of Tyre also therein, which brought Fish and all manner of Ware; and sold on the Sabbath to the Children of Judah, and in Jerusalem.

17. Then I contended with the Nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What Evil Things is this that ye do and Profane the Sabbath Day.

18. Did not your Fathers thus, and did not our God bring this Evil upon us, and upon this City? Yet ye bring more Wrath upon Israel by Profaning the Sabbath.

19. And it came to pass when the Gates of Jerusalem began to be Dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the Gates shou'd be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath. And some of my Servants set I at the Gates, that there shou'd be no Burden brought in on the Sabbath Day.

20. So the Merchants and Sellers of all kind of Ware lodged without Jerusalem once or twice.

21. Then I testify'd against them, and said unto them, Why lodge ye about the Walls? If ye do so again, I will lay Hands on you, From that time forth came they no more on the Sabbath.

22. And I commanded the Levites that they shou'd cleanse themselves, and that they shou'd come and keep the Gates to Sanctify the Sabbath Day. Remember me, O my God, concerning this also, and spare me according to the Greatness of thy Mercy.

SINCE 'tis the design of this Discourse to recommend to you that Noble Work of Reformat-
ing a Licentious Age and to Encourage and Direct your resolute Endeavours in it; I have fixt my Thoughts on this remarkable Passage, which sets before you so illustrious a Pattern as that of Pious *Nehemiah*. A Pattern on several Accounts most worthy of your Notice and Imitation. Partly in respect of his eminent Quality and Station. For not only the Title of *Tirshatha* or Governor so often given him; † but the whole History of his Transactions plainly shews, he had a considerable Authority among these restored Captives, whom by a Commission obtain'd from *Artaxerxes* he encouraged to Rebuild the Walls of Jerusalem. *Grotius* supposes he was one of the chief Members of the great Council of their Nation. And you may by the way Observe, how desirable a Thing it is to behold *Secular Honour and Power* in so happy a Conjunction with *exemplary Piety and Vertue*. Partly, Because the Circumstances of this great Attempt of his for Reformation bear no inconsiderable resemblance to your own. And chiefly, Because in his Management of this Attempt, and in the Success it was Crown'd with, you may Observe much both to Guide and to Animate your Holy Zeal: You may both discern the true Character of the excellent Spirit and Temper of a Pious Reformer, and the happy Issues in reference to the Publick and to himself, that were the Result of his Religious Undertaking. So that my Text,

without offering the least violence to it, will of it self suggest to you the most suitable and instructive Thoughts for this present Occasion.

I shall not now stay to take notice of those many other generous and pious Designs which this Great and Good Man not only undertook, but happily executed in the Face of the most formidable Difficulties, and violent Opposition. I shall only Observe, That having joy'd with the rest of the Princes the Levites and Priests in solemnly Renewing and Sealing their Covenant with God, he particularly appllied himself to the concerns of his House, restoring the Offices of the Priests and Levites in the Temple, and appointing Treasurers to distribute what the Law of *Moses* requir'd the other Tribes to contribute towards their liberal Support. † But because the bare setting up God's publick Worship will signify little to promote the great design of practical Religion, if the stated Seasons he has appointed for it be alienated from that Sacred to a common Use. Therefore this excellent Reformer seeing the Sabbath of God (that Day of Sacred Rest, set apart for the Contemplation of his Works and Word, and for the solemn Exercises of his Publick Worship †) thus openly profan'd by the generality of the People; he begins and prosecutes this pious Attempt of Rescuing it from so notorious Pollution, and of Restoring the Religious Observance of it.

† See 9, 10
11 and 12
Ch.

† 2 Gen.
2, 3.
4 Luke 16.
13 Acts 5.
1. 14.

I shall not now stay to Paraphrase the Text, both because it needs little Explication, and because what may be any way requisite will occur in prosecuting those *Observations* I shall make on this remarkable *Passage* for your present *Instruction* and *Use*. And I shall among many, that might be made, select the following ones.

I. We may from the matters of Fact mentioned in this *Historical Passage*, Observe, That *Profaneness* and *Licentiousness* do usually soon come to a great height, even among a People professing the True Religion, when they are countenanc'd and strengthen'd by the Example of those that are of the highest Rank and Figure.

You know nothing was more directly contrary to the Law of Moses than the doing any servile Work on their Sabbath. The fourth Precept of the Decalogue was most express to this Purpose; *Six Days shalt thou Labour and do all thy Work, but the Seventh Day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any Work, Thou, nor thy Son, nor thy Daughter, thy Man-Servant, nor thy Maid-Servant, nor thy Cattle, nor the Stranger that is within thy Gates, &c.* Even the Strangers were forbid to do any servile Work on the Sabbath, lest their Example shou'd ensnare the Jews in the guilt of Profaning it. And indeed in this point the Law of God enjoyn'd no more on the Jews, than what the Light of Nature it self did dictate to the Heathens; Viz. That that part of Time which was Devoted to the publick Worship of the Deity, shou'd not be employed in any thing that is inconsistent with it, or a real hindrance to it. Inasmuch as

† Macrob. Saturn. lib. 1. c. 16. Serv. Honor. in Virg. Georg. 1. Felt. v. Religios.

† Macrobius, Servius, Festus and others tell us, The Heathens themselves thought any servile Works, (that were not of pure necessity) a Pollution of those Days that were Consecrated to their Gods. So that the Practices here mention'd in the

Text, of treading Wine Presses, bringing in Sheaves, &c. selling Fish, and all manner of Ware, were most gross and palpable Violations of the Fourth Commandment, and even against the Morality of it. For sad experience sufficiently tells us, how soon all the impressions of Religion upon the Minds of a People are generally lost and defac'd, where either they seldom attend the Publick Worship of God at all, or where they are at Liberty to rush immediately from their Publick Devotions to their *Secular Affairs* or *sensual Pastimes*. 'Tis indeed no Wonder the Men of Tyre who disown'd the God of Israel shou'd make no scruple of Profaning his Sabbath. But that these restored Captives (so newly come out of those Calamities, that this among

† 18.

other Sins had brought upon them) shou'd be so generally involv'd in this hainous Guilt, seems more strange and unaccountable. But the wonder will cease when we consider, That our depraved Nature has a strong Aversion to the serious Exercises of true Piety, and for want of a spiritualized Appetite to relish a true delight in them, is prone to resent any long continuance of them as an unsufferable Weariness: † That these

† 1 Mal. 13. irreligious Inclinations in this People were the more deeply rivett'd from the Conjunction of their worldly Interest and Gain. †

† 8 Amos 5. v. They were too zealous Votaries of Mammon, to spare so much Time for God, and were far more intent upon their Traffick than their Devotions. But that which seems chiefly to have harden'd them in this instance of Profaneness, was the Example of their Nobles themselves. † And no

† v. 17. wonder the Body of this People shou'd by their Avarice as well as Irreligion, be drawn so deep into this Guilt; when those that wou'd have restrain'd this Impiety in others, by their Authority, did rather Encourage, and as it were, warrant it by their own Practice.

Now all the Reflection I shall make on this Observation, is only to suggest to you, That we need

the less wonder, to meet with so great Difficulties in our Attempts to Reform the Vices of the Age, when we not only consider the agreeableness of them to the propensities of our vitiated Nature, but the general Countenance they have had, even from too many of highest Rank and Authority. Alas; 'tis too evident a Truth to be now contested, That during the two late Reigns, a Torrent of Profaneness and Irreligion, Immorality and Lewdness, came in upon these Lands with an irresistible Violence. These Vices having once gain'd the Ascendant in a dissolute Court, soon came into Fashion and Repute. Swearing and Lewdness past for modish Accomplishments; and to spend one part of the Lords-Day in Drinking and Gaming, was so far from being thought a Crime, that the strict and religious Observance of it, was rather ridicul'd as a scrupulous preciseness; Nay, I had almost said Branded, as a piece of Jewish Superstition. The very Air of Reverence and Seriousness in Publick Devotion, was laugh'd out of Countenance, and no Man thought himself qualify'd to set up for a Wit, without a stock of Profaneness. And the Contagion of these Vices having diffus'd it self among a great part of our Nobility and Gentry; their Example did not only powerfully Recommend, but even seem to Authorize them among their Dependents and Inferiors. So that the pernicious Infection did from the tainted Head and Crown, soon spread it self to the remotest Parts of our Body-Politic. And no wonder that these Sins came to so dreadful a height, when they Reign'd so long uncontroled. For how indeed cou'd we expect that these Crimes shou'd have been punish'd, when those that shou'd have executed the Laws against them were usually the chief Transgressors of them. Since then these Vices are so suited to our Native Corruption, since they have been so rivett'd by long continued Custom, since they have been so universally diffus'd, and so long Triumph'd without any check or opposition; we must look for almost as desperate Resistance in all our Attempts against them, as he that wou'd stem a violent Stream, or raise up a Digue to set new bounds to the swelling Sea. 'Tis true indeed, we have no reason to look upon the difficulty as insuperable (as I shall more fully shew anon:) But I am sure we have no reason to grow remiss in our Attempts from any vain hope of so great a Work being easily effected. Our Conquest over the Vices of the Age, like that over a veterane and resolute Enemy, must be gain'd step by step, not without a tedious struggle and conflict. We must therefore lay our Account for long and perverse Opposition.

II. We may from the Argument which Pious Nehemiah insists on, in his Reproof to the Nobles of Judah observe, That when Profaneness and Immorality become National, (by being Universal and Uncontrold) They usually bring the heavy Judgments of God upon the Place and People, where they so notoriously abound.

Thus Nehemiah reminds these restored Captives, That this among other National Sins had brought on their Fathers the dismal Calamities of a Destructive War, and a long and miserable Exile, and upon their Capital City it's deplorable Desolation and Ruin. What evil thing is this (saith he, vers. 17, 18.) that ye do, and Profane the Sabbath-Day, did not your Fathers thus? and did not our God bring all this Evil upon us, and upon this City, Yet ye bring more Wrath upon Israel, by Profaneing the Sabbath. Nor is this the only Sin that is said in the Holy-Scriptures to draw down publick Judgments. For among other Sins for which a Land is said to mourn, and every one that dwells therein to languish, Swearing leads the Van, and Adultery brings up the Rear. IV. Hof. 2, 3. See to the like purpose the words of the Prophet Jeremiah 23. ch. 10. v. And you may observe, that when God by the same Prophet had charg'd the Jews with turning their external Plenty, into Fuel to their brutish Lusts, with committing Adultery, and assailing themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses; he add'd

How shall I pardon thee for this? shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, shall I not be avenged on such a Nation as this? v. Jer. 7, 8, 9. vers. And what is said concerning these particular Vices, is equally applicable to all other Instances of heinous Impiety and Immorality, when they become National, i. e. when they are generally committed, and that openly and insolently without any restraint and check from publick Authority: When all Ranks are involv'd in the guilt of them, even Rulers too, by practising them themselves, and conniving at them in others.

There is indeed very much in the natural tendency of Irreligion and Wickedness when they rise to a great height, to sink a Nation into Contempt and Misery. The Vices of a People often drain their Treasures into the hands of Forreigners, who being more frugal, enrich themselves at the expence of their Luxury and Intemperance. And a long course of unrestrained Lewdness, so emasculates the Spirits of a Nation, and debauches them into that effeminacy and softness, that makes them an easy Prey to every powerful Invader. Besides, there is so inseparable a Connexion between Piety towards God, and Justice and Truth and Charity towards Men, that when once the Bonds of Religion are cast off, those other Cements of humane Society are easily dissolv'd. And where those are once dissolv'd, a People need not the Sword of a Forreign Enemy to destroy them; their own Lusts will soon bring them into a State of War, and make them turn their hostile Swords against one another; They will bite and devour till they are consumed one of another. †

† Gal. 15
But, besides the natural tendency of such National Sins, The Punishment of them is much more ascertain'd by the Justice of God.

And therefore the Psalmist speaks of it, as the usual Method of his Providence, To turn a fruitful Land into Barrenness, for the Wickedness of them that dwell therein; 107 Psalm. 34 vers. And the Prophet Jeremy delivers it as the Stated Rule of his Government, with respect to these collective Bodies of Men; At what instant I shall speak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to build and to plant it; If it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my Voice, then will I repent of the good wherewith I said, I would benefit them. 18. Jer. 9, 10. 'Tis true indeed, these publick Judgments are executed on some Nations sooner, and in a lesser degree, as Warnings to them; On others they are executed much later, and in a more terrible manner, when by filling up the measure of their guilt, they are ripened for destructive Vengeance. But where such National guilt is persisted in, Divine wrath will sooner or later come either in monitory or in desolating Judgments. And the reasonableness hereof is obvious. For (as has been often observ'd) tho particular Persons are capable of future Rewards and Punishments, which are therefore most usually deferr'd to another Life; Yet Publick Societies, as such are not. They will all be disbanded before the Great Day of final Retribution; and therefore, if they be Rewarded and Punish'd at all, as Communities or Collective Bodies, (as 'tis highly congruous to the Wisdom and Justice of the Divine Government that they should) it must be in this Life. And accordingly they usually are, either Prosperous or Miserable, as either Piety and Vertue, or Irreligion and Vice, abound in them, and meet with publick Countenance and Encouragement.

On this Observation, I shall only make the following Reflections.

I. We may hence see the apparent Necessity of our vigorous Attempts, to suppress Profaneness and Immorality, in Order to the Prevention of National Judgments.

We have already found by sad Experience, That our publick Sins, (and I think we may justly add, those in particular, which we are now desirous to give some check to; Viz. Our Profanation of God's Holy

Name and Day, and our Lewdness and Impurity) had a deep hand in those Calamities that so lately befel this Kingdom, and almost laid it entirely waste.

It was these Sins so polluted our Land, as to cause it to cast out so many of it's defiled Protestant Inhabitants. It was these that brought our Holy Religion, as well as all our civil Interests on the very brink of imminent Destruction, so that, had not the Mercy of God prevented our Fears, as well as our Deserts, our Iniquities had prov'd our entire Ruin. We need not therefore go as far back as the Age of our Fathers, for such awful Examples of Divine Justice; We yet feel the severe effects of it, and bear upon us some visible Scars of those deep Wounds that our Sins have given us. And truly, the Great God has by our present Deliverance only given us a Merciful Reprieve, and put us upon a New Tryal, whether we will become a Reformed, (i. e. a Religious, a Just, and a sober) People. So that from the success of our present endeavours to remove this heinous Guilt from the Nation, we may take the truest Measures, whether our present Tranquility and Peace shall be Prolong'd, or whether we are Reserv'd for more terrible Destruction. If these Pious Attempts Prosper, We may hope a Gracious God will continue his true Religion among us, when the Honour of it is rescued from that open Contempt that the Profaneness of the Age had cast upon it, and especially, when the genuine Spirit of true Devotion is so sensibly reviv'd in it, even among those of the Rising Generation. We may hope he will restore, nay, encrease our external Prosperity, when 'tis no longer generally abus'd to Pamper and Feed our Brutish Lusts. Whereas, if these Attempts decline and fail; if Magistrates do not encourage the Execution of the excellent Laws that are made, or you grow negligent of your Duty, in order to the Convicting and Punishing Offenders; if these Vices shall at last Triumph over this feeble opposition, and still Return upon us with the same unrestrained Violence as before; We may all tremble to think how dismal an Omen this will be, of some unforeseen, but desolating stroke of Vengeance that is coming upon us.

2. I wou'd hence expostulate a little with the Profane and Lewd Sinners of the Age, in the like Language as Nehemiah did with the Nobles of Judah, What Evil Thing is this that ye do? Will you still express your Wretched Contempt of God, and of his solemn Worship, by profaning that holy day that is consecrated to it? Will you still dare by your insolent Oaths to affront and tear his glorious and sacred Name? Will you still by your odious Curses (a worse Dialect then that of Hell) trifle with his tremendous Justice, and set it at open defiance? Will you still by sottish Excesses, and by the hateful Impurity of abominable Lusts defile the Land? Will you yet bring more Wrath upon our Israel? Have we not already sufficiently smarted under the severity of God's righteous Judgments? Will you still encrease the large Score of publick Guilt, and add more Fuel to kindle anew the consuming Flames of his terrible Anger? Is this all the Return you make to the admirable Mercy of God, in rescuing you from your late Dangers and Fears, to become more bold and secure in the contempt of his Authority, and open violation of his Laws? Has he deliver'd you, that you might more freely commit all these Abominations? Has he given you this desirable Peace on Earth, that you might more presumptuously renew your desperate War against Heaven? O deceive not your selves. Mistake not this prolonged Patience of God for a License to offend him, with greater hope of Impunity. For his Justice, that is arm'd with Almighty Power, will not always be outdar'd by the provocations of hardened and insolent Sinners; but if you go on to incense him with so desperate a Presumption, he can make your Plagues as wonderful as your Crimes are aggravated.

ted, and punish you as you have sinn'd, with a high Hand, and an out-stretched Arm.

3. I wou'd hence apply myself to those of you, that are engag'd in this great Design of Publick Reformation. And you may hear learn some of the excellent Principles that you shou'd be acted by in the Prosecution of it; viz. *A deep Veneration for the Laws of the great God; a profound Reverence of his Sovereign Authority; an awful dread of his vindictive Justice, and a deep Concern to avert the terrible Effects of it from this sinful Land.* I know indeed, the profane and licentious Sinners of the Age, are ready in their Blindness and Passion, to call you as *Abab* did the Prophet, the Troublers of Israel. But you may justly reply as he did, 'Tis they that trouble our Israel, by forsaking the Commandments of God, and thereby incensing his Indignation against us. *1 Kings xviii. ch: 17 vers.* 'Tis they are the *Zimri's* whose vile Impurities threaten us with new Plagues from the Hand of Heaven. O then, let your Belief of God's dismal Threatnings, and earnest Desire to prevent the Execution of them, powerfully excite you to imitate the noble Zeal of pious *Phineas*; (I mean no farther then by promoting in your Station the Execution of our just Laws) and that with the same end in your Eye; viz. *To turn away the Wrath of God, that he may not consume us in his Jealousie*; (See *Numb. xxv.*) And if one Act of such Religious Zeal in *Phineas* cou'd arrest the avenging Hand of God, and stop a consuming Plague; if *Jerusalem* had been pardon'd and spar'd, if a Man cou'd have been found in it that executed Judgment; (see *Jer. v. 1.*) What may we not expect from your united and ardent Zeal for the Honour of God! Let it then quicken your resolute Attempts, to dam up this strong Current of Impiety and Wickedness, to consider, That you are thereby endeavouring to stop the Torrent of those desolating Judgments, that wou'd soon overflow us, if the Flood-gates of Sin were set as open as before. So that, you are at once doing the highest Service to the Publick Interest, as well as to the Glory of God.

III. We may from this Passage farther observe, *Tho' the Suppression of National Sins be principally the Work of the Civil Magistrate; yet all shou'd concur in it, that are capable of being regularly serviceable in promoting it.*

I speak here of the suppressing of Wickedness by the coercive Power of the Sword. (For 'tis that my Text leads me to consider.) 'Tis into the Hands of the Civil Magistrate that the Sword of Justice is put by the sovereign Majesty of Heaven. He is thereby constituted the Guardian of both Tables of the Law, and is therefore oblig'd to promote the Observance, and to restrain the open Violation of its excellent Precepts. He is the Minister of God, appointed by him as a Revenger to execute Wrath upon Evil-doers *Rom. xiii. 3, 4.* And indeed, if he do not so manage his Power, as to render it a Terror to all such, by restraining their publick and enormous Vices, he so far bears the Sword in vain, by not answering the great End for which he is intrusted with it. And 'tis the Magistrate's Authority must give Vigour and Force to all regular Attempts this way; and 'tis their Zeal and Resolution must put Life into them. And accordingly, You see in my Text, it was *Nebemiah* the Governour that here sets this excellent Work of Reformation on Foot. 'Twas he rebuk'd the Nobles of *Judah*, for encouraging this Profanation of the Sabbath. 'Twas he commanded the Gates to be shut; and by his threatening of just Severity, put a stop to that shameful Traffick, by which that sacred Day was polluted.

But since the effectual suppression of Profaneness and Wickedness, tho' warranted by the Magistrate's Authority, does necessarily require many Hands to concur in it; I therefore add, *That all shou'd be ready to join in so excellent a Design, so far as their regular Endeavours in their Station can be serviceable to promote*

it. Thus this Pious Reformer orders the Gates of *Jerusalem* to be shut; he sets his Servants there to stop any Burthen from entering into them. And because the People would probably pay a greater Reverence to the Levites, he orders them to keep the Gates, that they might reprove the People for their profanation of the Sabbath, and urge them to the Sanctification of it. Thus were all proper Hands set at Work to carry on so necessary and religious a Design.

On this Observation, I shall only make the two following Reflections.

1. We may hence see Matter of great thankfulness to God, and of Encouragement in this excellent Work, That our Magistrates, to whom it principally belongs, are so far engag'd in it.

What reason have we to bless and adore the Divine Majesty, that he has incited and directed those that are intrusted with the legislative Authority, to enact so excellent Laws against the profanation of his holy Name and Day; That he has fill'd so many inferior Magistrates with Zeal for the Execution of them. But above all, how shou'd our Hearts be cheer'd, and our Hands strengthened, by that publick Declaration which our gracious Sovereign has so lately made, *"That he esteems it as one of the greatest Advantages of the Peace, that he shall now have leisure, as for other Important Affairs, so particularly for this, of effectually discouraging Profaneness and Immorality."* O may the King of Kings confirm these pious Purposes in his Royal Heart, and inspire him with suitable Resolution and Courage in the happy Execution of them! May the Restoration of the Honour and the vital Power, as well as the Preservation of the External Profession of the true Religion among us, be the principal Glory of his Reign! May his eminent Conquest over the Vices of the Age (the most dangerous and deadly of all our Enemies) add a new and brighter Lustre to his Crown! While others stain their Government by such unwarrantable Acts of blind Zeal, as the extinguishing the Light of Divine Truth; may his become truly illustrious by such commendable Instances of regular Zeal, as the suppressing the unquestionably Evil, and pernicious Works of Darkness! May our publick Reformation most eminently begin where our Corruption did before, at our Court, and amongst our Nobility and Gentry; that there may be a happy Conjunction of Great Examples with Just Authority, to put Irreligion and Wickedness (if possible) out of Countenance, and to retrieve the declining Reputation and Interest of true Piety and Holiness!

Nay, we shou'd not in our Thankfulness to God, overlook the wonderful Efficacy of his Grace, in exciting the Zeal of so many private Christians to concur in this excellent Work, tho' under the greatest Discouragements. And especially, when we consider, how deeply the Contagion of Impiety and Lewdness had infected our Youth; What a surprizing Mercy is it to behold so many of them, so resolutely engaging in this Religious Design.

To observe such a Spirit of warm Devotion spreading itself among those of the rising Age; to see them prefer the strict Exercises of serious Piety, before the Folly of Plays and the Riot of Taverns; to see them, not only to renounce those Lusts themselves, which their Age has usually the strongest Propensity to, but to contribute their utmost Endeavours to suppress them in others; to behold them so declared Enemies of Irreligion and Vice, and so vigorous Abettors and commendable Patterns of Godliness and Sobriety; this is so marvellous an Instance of Divine Grace; 'Tis so astonishing and reviving a Sight, that we cannot but look upon it, as a happy Prognostick of future good, and from thence conceive Great and Glorious Hopes concerning the ensuing Age.

2. We shou'd hence be all of us excited to do our utmost towards the advancing this excellent Design, according

according to our Capacity and Opportunities of promoting it.

Those concern'd in the framing of our Laws, have already done *their* Part. Nay, they have laid a considerable Obligation on inferior Magistrates to do *their* Part also, by subjecting those to Penalties that neglect their Duty. But yet it were much to be wish'd, that all our *Justices of the Peace* wou'd imitate the Activity and Zeal, which *some* of them in this City have (to their perpetual and deserved Honour) set them so noble a Pattern of. I mean, That they wou'd animate and encourage the Zeal of *honest Informers*, and do their utmost, by their prudent Management of this Affair, to cover and protect them from the Notice and Malice of those enraged Offenders, whose Reformation they truly seek. *Constables* shou'd also perform their Part with Integrity and Diligence, with Courage and Resolution. They shou'd not be accessary to these Vices, by their Connivance at, or partial Lenity to offenders. Nay, *all* that can contribute to the Success of this great Undertaking, by giving *Informations* against Vice, should also faithfully do their Part. And indeed, 'tis chiefly on private Persons now, that the main strels of this important Work is devolv'd. For 'tis on your Resolution and Industry to convict Offenders, that the Execution of the good Laws, and the happy Effects we hope thereby, almost entirely depend. For without continued Convictions, these Vices will still go unpunish'd. And consequently, the profane and profligate Sinners of the Age, will persist still in their Wickedness, with as secure Contempt of the *Sword of Justice* in the *Hand of the Magistrate*, as hitherto, of that in the *Hand of God*. Whereas the more active your Societies combin'd for this excellent Purpose are, and the more the Numbers of Informers do increase, the less Hope of Impunity can such Offenders entertain; and the happier Prospect we shall have of that desired Success, which will both answer the *End* of these *Laws*, and therein the *Wishes* and *Hopes* of all good Men. Let none of us then, think ourselves excused from any Service we are capable of in so just and so glorious a Cause. Let it be rather our *laudable Ambition* to have some Hand (according to the Advantages our several Stations give us) in carrying on so Great and so Good a Work.

IV. We may from this Passage farther observe, *That those that are engag'd in this excellent Design of public Reformation, may be but few, and may have great Opposition to encounter; yet this shou'd not deter them from the vigorous Prosecution of it.*

We may evidently infer this from the *Circumstances* that *Nehemiah* was here involv'd in, and from his own *resolute Practice* under them. If he had only consider'd the Obstacles he was like to meet with, he had never begun an Attempt that promis'd so little Success. The Instance of Profaneness which he set himself against, was universally spread; he had all those *Foreigners* upon his Hands, whose Trade and Gain he entrench'd upon. He had the profane Humour of the *People*, fortify'd by their worldly Interest, to bear down. Nay, which was more formidable, he had the *Nobles* themselves to contend with, and was necessitated to carry this Point over their warm Opposition. And yet you see, all these Difficulties, did rather whet and inflame, than abate and cool his Pious Zeal. He expostulates with the *Nobles*, he opposes his Authority to popular Discontent, and threatens the *Foreigners* that occasion'd this Profaneness by their Avarice, with just Severity. He applies himself with undaunted Resolution and unwearied Diligence, to remove every Rub out of the way, and to encounter and master every Difficulty that he met with: He thought the Glory of God, the Honour of his Law, and the Publick good, too deeply concern'd, to be so easily affrighted or disheartned from his Duty.

Let me then propose *this admirable Example of his to your Imitation, who are engag'd in the like Religious Undertaking.* I need not tell you, that tho' we have so excellent Laws enacted, for the suppression of Profaneness and Vice, how few there are that appear zealous and active for the Execution of them. The Numbers of those that are engag'd in the Prosecution of this Glorious Design, do as yet, bear but little Proportion to the number of Offenders, and to the due extent of the Work itself. Nor need I tell you, what Discouragements you lye under; and what a Train of terrifying Difficulties you have yet to encounter. Difficulties so great, especially in reference to other Parts of the Kingdom, that some who have been urg'd to make such Attempts in the Country, have insisted on this as their chief Objection, *That they had no Prospect of succeeding in them.* The number of Offenders being so great, and so few others, having either any *Inclination* or *Courage* to convict them. And even in this City, when we consider, how few of those that are most capable do encourage the Design. How great the Malignity and Rage of convicted Offenders is, and what hazard all that are active in this Cause run, of exposing themselves to their Ill-will and Revenge; we must confess, the Work is attended with extraordinary and formidable Hardships.

But yet after all, none of these Difficulties shou'd discourage us from our Duty. Nay, they shou'd rather reinforce than extinguish our Holy Zeal, in the Discharge of it. We shou'd be so far from being tempted thereby, to desert so glorious a Cause, that we shou'd be rather excited to greater Activity for the Advancement of it: As will appear, if we consider the following Particulars.

1. *Great Difficulties must be expected in prosecution of so pious a Design.*

We must look for it, that those that carry on so dangerous an Attempt, to subvert the *Devil's* Interest, will meet with warm and fierce Opposition. All the *Militia* and *Posse* of that *Infernal Kingdom* will be rais'd against them. Satan will inspire all his Instruments and Agents (those *Sons of Belial*) to unite their *Policy* and *Power*, that they may withstand and frustrate so bold an Attempt, that so directly threatens Ruin to his usurped Empire and Throne. As no sooner did *Lot* offer a gentle Reproof to the impure Inhabitants of *Sodom*, but they presently fly in his Face, with *reviling Scorn*, and *furious Threatnings*. Gen. xix. 9. We shou'd therefore be fore-arm'd with the Consideration hereof, and enter on this great Work, as expecting the utmost Resistance in it.

2. *The Prospect of Difficulties will not exempt us from our Obligation to so plain a Duty.*

I say, to so plain a Duty. For I take it to be as certainly our Duty, to endeavour the suppression of heinous Profaneness and Immortality, according to the Advantages and Opportunities that our several Stations give us, as it is to advance the Kingdom of God, and to promote the Honour and Observance of his Laws. I do not see, how any can be excus'd from this necessary Work, that are capable of being regularly serviceable in it. For here is now, in this our Age and Day, a manifest Conflict, between the Kingdom of God, and that of Satan, between the interest of Piety and Vertue, and that of Profaneness and Vice. And can we think it inconsistent with our Duty, (even with our Baptismal Obligations themselves) to stand *Neuter* in so important a Cause, or to suffer the Interest of God and Holiness to sink, and that of Irreligion and Immortality to prevail, thro' our wretched *Lukewarmness* and *Indifferency*? Is this reconcilable with that ardent Affection to that blessed Majesty, and that entire devotedness to his Honour and Service, that we pretend unto? Is this consistent with the sincerity of those publick Prayers for Reformation, which we have so often

offer'd up, to use no Endeavours to promote it, when so far an Advantage is put into our Hands? May we not justly apply those remarkable Words of our blessed Saviour to this particular Case, which he speaks in reference to the general Opposition of the Devil's Interest to his; *He that is not for me, is against me.* Mat. xii. 30. Even as in case of a foreign Invasion, that Subject that is not for his rightful Sovereign, is by just Interpretation against him. So in this case, he that does not cordially and openly espouse the Cause of God, shall be regarded and treated as a secret Enemy to it.

Now, if this be so evident and important a Duty, no Difficulties will warrant our willful Neglect of it. For when we oblige ourselves to the Duties of Christianity, we are allow'd no Reserves, of only performing them so far as is consistent with our Safety and Ease. Our Profession in such Cases, requires the Exercise of Fortitude and Courage, of Patience and Self-denial. It obliges us to sacrifice our temporal Interest and Reputation, to the superior Interest of the Glory of God, and allows us not to baulk any eminent Service to him, because we cannot perform it without considerable Toil and Hazard. No, we shou'd look on such Obstacles and Difficulties in our way, as rather design'd to try the sincerity and fervour of our Zeal, the strength and constancy of our Resolutions. And therefore, the Prospect of them, shou'd rather inspire us with new Force and Vigour. For as the Presence of a *Lion in the Street*, is but the *Sluggard's Excuse*; so to be affrighted by every Appearance of Danger, from our undoubted Duty, is but a suspicious Character. For, among those that are said to have their Portion in the infernal Lake, the *Fearful and Unbelieving*, (the timorous Cowards in the Cause of God) are plac'd in the very Front of them. Rev. xxi. 8.

3. *Shou'd we fail of Success in this great Design, yet we have delivered our own Souls.*

The Guilt of publick Profaneness and Wickedness will not lye at our Door, when we have done our utmost for the Restraint of it. Nor shall our Fidelity, tho' it may want Success with Men, want Acceptance with God, and a liberal Reward from him.

4. *We have no reason to be discourag'd by the great Difficulties in our way from all hope of Success.*

For our Success depends on his Concurrence and Blessing, to whose Power no Obstacles we can meet with, are insuperable.

But this leads me to the next Observation.

V. We may from the happy Issue of *Nehemiah's* Undertaking, Observe, *That the great God is often pleas'd to crown the seemingly weak Attempts of his faithful Servants for his Cause and Interest, with unexpected and wonderful Success.*

Of this, my Text gives us a lively Instance. For tho' *Nehemiah's* single Zeal seems to have been the only Spring of this Attempt, to recover the Religious Observation of the Sabbath; and tho' he had so general and strong Opposition to contend against; yet you see by his Vigour and Resolution, he carried the Point, and brought about the Reformation he intended. That blessed God, who had inspired his Heart with so excellent a Design, strengthening his Hands in the Execution of it, and bending the Hearts of others to a Compliance with his just Authority, and Religious Undertaking. And no doubt, it did much facilitate the Success of his Endeavours, that the Law of God did so evidently condemn the Practice he oppos'd. So that, those who had Inclination enough to so ill a Cause, as that of *Profaneness*, yet were almost *asham'd* to appear for it; and those who might have had an *ill Eye* upon his good Design, yet had scarce the Confidence to oppose it; their own Consciences being convinc'd of the Reasonableness and Equity of it.

Let us then draw abundant Encouragement to these our Religious Endeavours, from the Consideration of our

being engag'd in the Cause of God, and from the Prospect of his powerful Assistance and Blessing. Let us fortify our own Resolutions, with the Argument that pious *Nehemiah* elsewhere uses: *The God of Heaven be will prosper us, therefore we his Servants will arise and build.* Neh. ii. 10. His mightier Power can make the weakest Instruments successful, to pull down the Strong-holds of Sin, and can make use of *Babes* to quell his most formidable Enemies.

And truly, we have already had that Experience of the favourable Providence of God, shining upon our Religious Undertakings of this kind, that wou'd render us inexcusable, shou'd we distrust his future Aids. And to convince you hereof, I need only set before you, the following brief Account of the Societies for Reformation, both in *London* and in *this City*. And, because the account of them is intermix'd with that of the Religious Societies of young Persons, I must touch a little on both.

For the Religious Societies of young Persons in *London*, belonging to the *Establish'd Church*, that pious conformable Divine, *Mr. Woodward*, tells us; "The first Rise of them was about twenty Years ago. About that time, several young Persons being touch'd with a tender Sense of their Souls, applied themselves to Religious Thoughts. And, as they often accidentally met at the Houses of their Ministers, they were by some of them, advised to meet once a Week, and to apply themselves to good Discourse. And, for the better Regulation of their Meetings, several Orders and Rules were given them. In pursuance whereof, they continued their Religious Meetings, till *K. James's* Reign. And tho' the Aspect of publick Affairs, did then discourage some, yet others of them continued their pious Resolutions and Practices, tho' they took the most prudent Course for concealing their Meetings. In the beginning of this Reign, they were accus'd to the *Bishop of London*, as tending to *Schism*. Upon which, they presented their Apology, which being confirmed by the Testimony of their Ministers, gave full Satisfaction. And having then greater Encouragement, they quickly increas'd to 25 Societies, within the compass of the Bills of Mortality, besides those since form'd at *Shadwell* and *Greenwich*. And what Sense our late excellent *Queen* had of these Societies, the *Bishop of Salisbury* acquaints us in his *Memoirs* of her. "She bearkned (saith he) carefully after every thing that seem'd to give us some Hope, that the next Generation wou'd be better than the present, with a particular Attention. She heard of a Spirit of Devotion and Piety that was spreading itself among the Youth of this great City, with a true Satisfaction. She enquir'd often, and much about it, and was glad to hear it went on and prevailed, which was her hearty Wish and daily Prayer.

"Now, out of these Religious Societies at *London*, there have been two associated Bodies form'd, who have made it their Endeavour to inform against Profaneness and Vice, meeting weekly to carry it on, according to the legal and prudential Rules, which some Lawyers drew up for them. In which Work, beside Time, Labour and Reproach, some of them have run considerable Hazards of their Lives.

"He tells us also, there is another eminent Society in *London*, consisting of many considerable Gentlemen, and chief Citizens, who frequently meet, to super-intend, direct, and pursue this glorious Work of Reformation, consulting the best Methods to carry it on, and promoting it, by large and honourable Contributions. By which means, several thousands of Drunkards, Swearers and Profaners of the Lord's-day, have been brought to just Punishment.

"Besides this Society, many Justices of the Peace meet weekly on this Design.

"There

" There is also, saith he, an active Society for Reformation, consisting of about Sixty Persons, most House-keepers, in, and about the Tower-Hamlets; to whom several Persons of the City are joyn'd, with several Church-Wardens, Constables, and other Officers. All these tho' of different Persuasions, joyn against Profaneness and Debauchery. And these have put down several Markets kept on the Lords-Day, and suppress'd some hundreds of Houses of ill Fame. And by the industry of this Society alone, about two Thousand lewd Persons have suffer'd the Penalty of the Law, suitable to their Crimes.

" On which Account, They have had great Countenance from several Courts of Judicature, and great Encouragement from the Lord-Mayor and Court of Aldermen, who have Honourably contributed towards the necessary Expences of so great an Undertaking.

" And so far are the Persons concern'd in the Great Work, from having any Prospect of Gain by it, That (he tells us) One of these Societies has in three Years past, expended above 700 l. in it.

Thus far Mr. Woodward in reference to the Societies at London.

For those Societies that have combin'd here, for the same excellent Purposes; They are too well known to your selves, to need my giving any particular Account of them. Nor is it, I suppose, either agreeable to your own Desires, or proper for the Design you are engag'd in, to descend to any particular Account of your Rules, and the Methods of your managing this great Affair. I shall therefore, content my self with this general Remark, That I think you have in a short Time, gone a great Way towards copying the excellent Pattern that London has set, (a due allowance being made for your great disadvantages.)

But I must not forget to pay that just Honour, that is due to those of you, that belong to the Establish'd Church, That 'tis you, both in London and here, that began this Pious Design, of putting the Laws against Vice in Execution. And indeed, you had on many Accounts, far greater advantages to begin it; and particularly this considerable one, That your known Zeal for and adherence to the Establish'd Church, cut off from the Profane and Licentious part of the Age, all pretence of running down this excellent Work, as if it were only the factious Design of a Party. But since you have led the way, I hope Protestant Dissenters will not fail to tread in your Glorious Steps, but will joyn both their Hearts and their Hands with you, in thus advancing the Interest of uncontested Piety and Virtue, on the Ruins of Irreligion and Vice. Nay, I hope that on thus Uniting in this eminent Service to the Cause of our Common Lord and Master, will lay some Foundation of a happy Union of our Affections. I hope we shall hereby be more fully convinc'd, how much more great and valuable those Things are, wherein we are happily agreed, than those wherein we yet differ; And that the few differences in Opinion or Practice, which yet remain, shou'd no way obstruct that mutual unfeigned Love, which we shou'd always bear to all those that Love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. We are (Blessed be God) happily united in the main Interest of Practical Holiness, and need little more towards perfecting our Concord, than the making the great things of Christianity, which we all own, the only Terms of our mutual Communion. But to return from this Digression, I shall now add, That considering your Circumstances and Numbers, I think that the great God has as remarkably own'd and succeeded your diligent Attempts for Reformation here, as he has those of our Brethren in London. For, besides the considerable progress you have made towards suppressing Lewdness, and restraining the open Profanation of the Lords Day, I am well assur'd that there have been near 3000 Convictions, of such as have been Guilty of

Cursing and Swearing, since the Enacting the late Law against these detestable Vices. And indeed, the success of your Endeavours is so remarkable in reference to this last particular, that I think 'tis with great Satisfaction observ'd, and acknowledg'd by all good Men. For that vile Language of Ashdod, or rather that abominable Dialect of Hell, that us'd so constantly to grate our Ears whenever we walk'd the Streets, is now comparatively, but seldom heard. That horrid Impiety, that was before so loud and insolent, has now in a great measure stopt it's Mouth. So that the Number of Offenders which seem'd at first so discouraging, begins very sensibly to decrease upon our Hands. And I doubt not you will find that many of those difficulties, which at first view seem'd insuperable, will be conquer'd by a steady Resolution. And truly, what we have already gain'd is a considerable step. We may hope that the Habits of Vice will be gradually broke, when the ordinary Practice of it is so much restrain'd. And we may hope, that it's cursed Contagion will be in a great measure stopt, when the instances of it are comparatively rare, seldom appearing in Publick View, and not without great hazard of Discovery and Punishment. So that, the Licentious Sinners of the Age, will be no longer hardned by the Commonness and the Impunity of their Crimes.

Be not then afraid (my Brethren) of encountering all the Opposition of a Profane and Lewd Generation. For, let me tell you, That Vice, after all it's empty Noise, is but a Sneaking and Cowardly Thing. It's Votaries themselves, are generally ashamed to own so vile a Cause. Whereas, the Cause, of Piety and Vertue, which we espouse, shou'd inspire all it's Friends and Abettors, with a Courage answerable to the Justice and Excellency of it. What is said of the Devil himself, may be applied in some measure to his Ignoble Vassals; Resist him, and he will flee from you. 4 James 7. And I hope, you have too great Zeal and Resolution for the Cause of God, to be affrighted from it, by a few threatening Words, or daunted with every appearance of Danger. Nay, I doubt not, the Offenders themselves, if they wou'd speak the truth, do in their Conscience believe, that you are acted herein with a sincere Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Interest of Religion; since you can have no prospect of Worldly gain by it, but have a certain prospect of great Hazard and Toyl. And whatever Language their present Passion may suggest, if they are ever truly reclaim'd, they will applaud your Zeal, and thank you for your Fidelity. Go on then, boldly to attack these Goliaths, these insolent Vices of the Age, that have so long defy'd the God of Israel, and affronted his Sacred Authority and Laws. 'Tis his blessed Cause you plead, and 'tis his Protection and Assistance you may expect. He can Honour the most despised Instruments, to effect the most Glorious Purposes of his Grace and make even Mountains of Difficulties, a Plain before Zorobabel. Let me then bespeak, both Magistrates and Ministers, and private Christians, in the Words of God, by the Prophet Haggai, to those employed in rebuilding the Temple; Yet now be strong, O Zorobabel, saith the Lord, and be strong, O Josedec, the Son of Joshua the High-Priest, and be strong all ye People of the Land, and Work, for I am with you, saith the Lord of Hosts. Hag. ii. 4. And may your Language in compliance with this encouraging Exhortation, be like that of the People to Nehemiah, when he told them, of the good Hand of God upon him, and of the King's Words which he had spoken to him; They said, Let us Rise up and Build, and so they strengthened their Hands for this good Work. Neh. ii. 18. And what do we know, but that this Work of Reformation, which is but now as a Cloud, no bigger than a Man's Hand, may by the Divine Blessing, spread and cover the whole Land. Your exemplary Zeal and Activity in this City, may do much to excite the like in other Parts of the Kingdom. And we may hope, That

That *Profaneness* and *Immorality* will not long stand their Ground, if once, both *Magistrates* and *Ministers*, and *private Christians*, heartily joyn their Endeavours for the suppression of it.

VI. We may from this Passage, farther Observe, *That our Reflections upon our own Zeal and Fidelity, in such self-denying Services to the Interest and Cause of God, will be sweet and Comfortable, and give us great Encouragement to hope for God's Gracious Acceptance and Reward.*

This we may clearly infer from *Nebemiah's* Prayer, upon the review of this instance of his Pious Zeal. *Remember me, O my God, for this also.* He had offer'd the like Petition before, on the like Occasion, *Remember me, O my God, for this, and wipe not out my good Deeds that I have done for thy House, and for the Offices thereof, v. 14.*

And hence it evidently appears, That, as he cou'd in this Undertaking appeal to God for the *sincerity* of his *Intentions*, as well as the *goodness* of his *Actions*. So he look'd back upon them with inward *Serenity* and *Peace*. He had the reviving Testimony and Euge of his own *Conscience*, and thereby was rais'd to the comfortable *Hopes* of *God's Gracious Approbation*, and of that *Glorious Recompence*, which he has promis'd to all them that sincerely serve him. He therefore prays, That God would regard this solid Proof of his sincere Affection with a favourable Eye, and as it were, place it on Record, among other Evidences of his Integrity towards him. See the like Prayer of good *Hezekiah*. *If. xxxviii. 3.*

Let us then be careful, so to discharge this part of our Duty with Integrity, That our Reflections thereon may be thus comfortable to us. Let us take care, That in all our Attempts for Publick Reformation, we act from truly *Divine Principles*; from a just hatred of Sin, and profound esteem of the *Laws of God*; from an unfeigned Regard to his Honour and Interest, from a hearty Zeal for the Publick Good, and from Charitable Inclinations towards the Offenders themselves, being much more desirous of their being *Reclaim'd*, then of their being *Punish'd*, and urging the Execution of the *Laws* no farther, then is requisite to attain the end of them; Viz. *The Discouragement and Restraint of these Vices.* Nay, See that your Conduct in this matter be answerable to these excellent Principles. Let not your Zeal in any Case Transport you beyond the bounds of the *Law*, to the least prejudice of any Man's *Civil Liberties and Rights*. Use your utmost caution against prosecuting so good an End, by any *Irregular or unwarrantable Means*. For nothing can more effectually wound your Design, than your giving occasion for any just complaints of this kind.

But while you are Conscious to your selves, that you act from truly *Pious Motives*, and in so regular a way, I doubt not you'll find the Remembrance of your Fidelity and Diligence in this great Work, *Sweet and Refreshing*. For no Services we pay to God, do usually yield us such solid Comfort in the Review, as those wherein we most sincerely aim at his Glory, and are carried on by a fervent Love of him, in opposition to our worldly advantage and fleshly Ease. Such instances of self-denying Obedience wherein we make all lower Interests of our own, stoop to the Superior, and more valuable Interest of God, are the more clear and satisfying Evidences of our own Sincerity. And, 'tis these that Raise us to the firmest persuasion of *Divine Acceptance*, and to the most lively hope of a future Reward. And sure, the Acceptance and Approbation of the great God, will infinitely countervail the Censures and Reproaches of blind and prejudic'd Men; and his glorious Recompence will infinitely out-weigh all that we can possibly suffer from their Malice or furious Revenge. They may studiously endeavour to misrepresent your Actions and Designs; But as it is to the Eyes of your great Judge, that you are chiefly concern'd to ap-

prove your selves, so you may trust to liberal a Master for a bountiful Retribution. Whereas I fear those that have the same Opportunities and Advantages with you to be serviceable in a Design, wherein the honour of God is so highly concern'd, but refuse their concurrence in it, (either because they are loath to take any Pains in it, or loath to run any Hazard by it) will one Day find their Consciences charge them with the guilt of wretched *Neutrality* and *Luke-marmness* in the case of God; and the review of it will render the Thoughts of their final Account less comfortable to them. O do not then to avoid the displeasure of Men incur the more terrible displeasure of the Great God, nor forfeit his Heavenly Reward for fear of prejudicing your temporal Interest.

VII. We may from the last Clause of *Nebemiah's* Petition farther observe, *That when we are engag'd in the most eminent Service to God, and perform it with the greatest Zeal and Fidelity; Yet we shou'd be so far from being proud thereof, that we shou'd rather retain a humbling sense of those sinful Defects that have attended it, which make us stand in great need of his abundant Mercy to pardon and Spare us.*

Thus, Tho' *Nebemiah* appeals to God, as the Witness of his Integrity, in this important Service, and implores him to remember him for it; yet he was so far from imagining, that he had hereby merited any thing at his Hands, that on the contrary, in the abasing Sense of his own manifold Failures therein, he adds this humble Request also and spare me according to the greatness of thy Mercy. And indeed, so far are we in point of *Strict Justice*, from deserving any thing from the great God, that 'tis meer Mercy in him, to accept the best of our defiled Services, and to pardon the sinful Imperfections that cleave to them. And 'tis for that End, we stand in such absolute need of an attoning Mediator with him. So little Reason have we, for any High and self exalting Thoughts, of our own defective Obedience, which needs the Blood of Sprinkling, to cleanse away the Stains of it.

O let us then Learn, to imitate the Humility, as well as the Zeal and Courage of good *Nebemiah*. Let neither our Diligence in this excellent Work, nor our considerable Success in it, puff us up with over-weening Thoughts of our selves. For there are manifold Considerations that should abase us, and hide Pride from our Eyes. If there be any difference between us and profligate Sinners themselves, we must chiefly ascribe it to the distinguishing Grace of God, 'Tis He that inspires us with Zeal and Resolution for so hazardous and difficult a Work: 'Tis He puts an honour upon us, by giving us the opportunity and advantage of being employed in it. 'Tis He crowns our weak Endeavours with so unexpected Success. But especially we shou'd consider that we neither perform this nor any other Part of the Work assign'd us, without great Weakness and Imperfection, without manifold Frailties and Failings, and in so faulty a manner, as needs infinite Mercy and Goodness to forgive our Defects, and much more to accept and reward our Sincerity. So that we must after our purest Services wash our Robes and make them white in the Blood of the Lamb, *Rev. vii. 14.* After all we have done, we must say as our Lord has taught us, *That we are but unprofitable Servants that have only done that which was our Duty to do. Luke xvii. 10.*

And now I shall conclude this Discourse with one general Remark concerning this eminent Reformer *Nebemiah*, viz. That in the whole History of his Trans-actions, we may see very conspicuous Characters, not only of his signal Piety, but of his universal Probity and Goodness. His whole Life seems to have been of a Piece, most upright and unblameable. He was every way a bright Example to the Age in all pious and vertuous Conversation. And such a Man was most proper for so glorious and so difficult an Undertaking.

And herein above all I would recommend him as a Pattern to those of you that appear so active in this necessary Work of publick Reformation. For this alone can put *honour* upon your worthy Enterprize, and give general *Success* to it. For, shou'd you be guilty of any of those Vices your selves which you convict others of, this wou'd render all your Pretences to Zeal for Reformation of Manners, the Object of publick Contempt and Indignation. Who wou'd not in this Case upbraid you in the Language of the Apostle, *Thou that sayest another shou'd not commit Adultery, Dost thou commit Adultery? Thou that makest thy boast of the Law through breaking the Law dishonourest thou God?* Rom. ii. 22, 23. Nay, this is not enough, your Conversation must not only be free from these Vices, but from all other Instances of such known, and equally heinous Immorality and Wickedness, even such as human Laws may not take cognizance of, to Restrain and Punish. For if you, that will not *Wore* or *Swear*, or *Prophane the Lord's-Day*, yet will *Lye* or *Defraud*, *Grind* and *Oppress*, &c. Who will not be ready to Reproach your forwardness to Punish those other Sins, in the Language of our Saviour, *Thou Hypocrite, first cast the Beam out of thine own Eye, and then shalt thou see more clearly to cast the Mote out of thy Brothers Eye.* Matth. vii. 5.

Who can forbear to say, *Physician heal thy self*; First strictly reform thy own Life, before thou settest up for a Reformer of the Age. The Snuffers of the Sanctuary were to be of pure Gold. And their Light shou'd shine brightly in all good Works, who go about to reclaim others from their Works of Darknes. In a Word, Your abounding in all the Fruits of Piety and Holiness, Justice and Charity, Humility and Meekness, Sobriety and Heavenliness, will be the highest Credit, and the best support to the excellent Cause you are engag'd in, and most effectually Silence all Reproaches against it. And indeed, the Cause you have espous'd, is so truly Honourable in it self, so eminently conducive to the Glory of God, so highly acceptable to him, and approv'd by all good Men, that I doubt not you may apply to your selves for your Encouragement in prosecuting it, what God himself speaks to the Jews, when they began to Rebuild his Temple, *From this Day I will bless you.* Hag. ii. 19. And I am truly persuaded, that his gracious Providence will give us Occasion, from these our sincere and vigorous Attempts against Irreligion and Vice, to Date, not only the sensible Revival of the Internal Interest of true Religion, but also the Rising Prosperity and Glory of these Kingdoms. So that, becoming a Reformed, we shall become a Flourishing and Happy People.

S E R M O N XXXII.

Preach'd on the Occasion of the Accession of His Sacred Majesty King *George* to the Throne, and His safe Arrival in the Kingdom, *Sept.* 19. 1714.

Psal. cxxii. 7, 8.

Pray for the Peace of Jerusalem, they shall prosper that Love thee. Peace be within thy Walls, and Prosperity within thy Palaces.

THE devout Psalmist tells us elsewhere, That God has prepared his Throne in the Heavens, and that his Kingdom rules over all, Psal. ciii. 19. His wise and sovereign Providence shou'd be observ'd and ador'd by us in all the marvellous Dispensations of it. And we, in these Kingdoms, might justly be charg'd with the most stupid Ingratitude, if we shou'd overlook this surprizing Instance of it that is now before us, viz. The peaceable undisturb'd Accession of a Protestant Prince to the Throne (according to the Legal Settlement of the Descent of the Crown) in Opposition to so great a Number of Popish Claimants.

It does therefore highly become all sincere Protestants to usher in this new auspicious Reign, both with their thankful Praises, and their ardent Prayers.

We have abundant Ground for the most thankful Praises.

We ought to account it a singular Blessing, that our Laws have made so effectual a Provision for the Continuance of a Protestant Succession in general, by excluding all Papists from inheriting the Crown. Our former sad Experience of the pernicious Effects of a Popish Government, does every way justify such a necessary Precaution for the future Prevention of them. Especially, when we consider, that a Popish Prince must be false to his own Religion, and must counteract the wretched Principles of it, if he do not endeavour to subject his Kingdoms to the scandalous Yoke of papal Usurpation, and even to exterminate those whom that apostate Church of Rome brands with the odious Name of Hereticks. If he be remiss and negligent in this Work, the Decrees of their Lateran Council subject him to the double Sentence of Excommunication and Deposition. So that he forfeits his Crown in this World, and his Salvation in the next, unless he extirpate Heresy as far as 'tis in his Power.

How

How reasonable then is it, that Protestant Nations shou'd provide for their own Safety, by incapacitating those to reign over them, whose principles bind them to endeavour the Ruin of those innocent Subjects whom they shou'd protect!

And 'tis no less valuable a Blessing, that our Laws have particularly establish'd the Succession in the illustrious Family of *Hanover*. Blessed be God, that our Throne is now fill'd with a Prince of that House, descended from that excellent *Queen of Bohemia*, (a Stem of our ancient Royal Line) whose Royal Virtues so illustriously shone thro' the dark Cloud of her Sufferings. And we ought not to overlook the marvellous Conduct of Divine Providence that has now advanc'd one of her Race to the Imperial Crown of these Realms: A Prince that has already so eminently signaliz'd his Zeal for the general Interest of the Protestant Religion abroad, and for the indanger'd Liberties of *Europe*, that this glorious Cause may expect to find in him a powerful Defender and Patron. A Prince so known and distinguish'd abroad, for the Regularity and Order of his Court, for the deep Penetration of his Judgment, for the Prudence and Steadiness of his Councils, for his firm Adherence to his Allies, for his accurate Inspection into all publick Affairs, and for the Equity and Mildness of his Government, that these god-like Qualities, that have so justly indear'd him to his Subjects abroad, may sufficiently recommend him, as every way deserving that Crown by his Royal Vertues, which our Laws have intail'd on him and his Family. A Prince, under whose Conduct we may hope to see the Glory of *Great Britain* rais'd to 'its utmost Height, by his appearing at the Head of the Protestant Interest in *Europe*, and becoming the successful Arbitrer of the present confus'd Affairs of it. And 'tis a great Addition to our Happiness, under his Majesty's Government, that there are so many living and hopeful Branches of the Royal Family) a Prince that Inherits the Vertues of his Royal Father, match'd to a Princess of incomparable Endowments, worthy of her illustrious Descent, by whom several Branches are already added to the Royal Line, not to mention the probable Hopes of a more numerous Issue) as to give us the most pleasing Prospect of those two invaluable Blessings of the reform'd Religion, and our Civil Liberties, being safely transmitt'd to succeeding Ages. These are National Mercies, of so vast Importance and Moment, that the serious Contemplation of them may well fill our Hearts with Joy, and our Mouths with Songs of Praise.

But we have no less reason to accompany our thankful Praises with our most ardent Prayers.

We have need to pray, that that Great God, by whom Kings Reign, and Princes decree Justice, would himself be the powerful Guarantee of our present happy Establishment, and ingage his Sovereign Providence for the continued Defence of it. For we have Enemies both at home and abroad, that look upon it with an envious Eye, and wou'd gladly bring us again under that Yoke of Popery and slavery from which his mighty Hand has so often rescu'd us. But blessed be his Name, that their confident Hopes, and our anxious Fears, have been hitherto so seasonably disappointed. And that we see so bright a Reverse of a late gloomy and threatening Scene.

And 'tis to excite you to such ardent Prayers as are suitable to this happy Juncture of Affairs, that I have chosen these Words as the Subject of your present Meditation.

The holy Penman of this Psalm appears to have been inspir'd with those two excelent Principles, viz. An high Veneration for the publick Solemnities of Divine Worship, and an hearty Zeal for that impartial Administration of Civil Justice, on which the Preservation of Liberty and Property so visibly depends,

Jerusalem was the Capital City of *Judea*. And 'tis here considered by the Psalmist, partly, as the Seat of true Religion; and partly, as the Seat of publick Justice and Government.

Jerusalem is here consider'd by him as the Centre and Seat of True Religion under the *Mosaic Oeconomy*.

There was the House of God, The Testimony of *Israel* †. That Tabernacle in *David's* Time, and afterwards that Temple in *Solomon's* Reign, to which the Tribes of *Israel* were wont to repair at their three yearly Festivals; and in which there was so sensible a Manifestation of the Divine Presence and Glory among them. And 'tis probable this Psalm was compos'd by *David* for the Use of the People, after the Ark was brought to *Jerusalem*; and the Government, by Divine Appointment, establish'd in his Family.

Jerusalem is also consider'd by him, as the Seat of Civil Justice and Government.

There he tells us, † The Thrones of Judgment, the Thrones of the House of *David* were set, both the Royal Throne of *David*. And the supreme Court of Justice, and those inferior ones establish'd by and under *David's* Authority.

And the Psalmist here invites the pious *Israelites* of that Age to pray for the Peace (or Welfare) of *Jerusalem* under both these Considerations.

Now since the literal *Jerusalem* under the *Mosaic Dispensation*, was an Emblem and Type of the Christian Church, that mystical *Jerusalem*; We may justly consider this Exhortation as a seasonable Direction to our present Duty. We are as much oblig'd as they to pray for the Peace of this part of God's *Jerusalem* in our Day and Age; and may apply to ourselves this encouraging Motive thereto, they shall prosper that love thee.

In treating on this Subject, I shall insist on these three general Heads.

I. I shall consider, What we are to pray for under this Phrase, *The Peace of Jerusalem*.

II. In what Manner, and from what Principles we shou'd offer up such Prayers in order to their being acceptable and successful. And,

III. What Motives and Encouragements we have, thus to pray for the Peace of our *Jerusalem*.

And here I shall particularly consider the Motive in the Text, *They shall prosper that love thee*.

I. I shall consider, what we are to pray for under this Phrase, *The Peace of Jerusalem*.

By the Peace, we must in general understand the Welfare and Prosperity of it; and more especially, both that inward Concord, and that outward Tranquility and Safety of it, which are so highly conducive to its Welfare, and which are most eminently included under the Name of Peace.

Now that we may the better understand, what publick Blessings we in these Kingdoms ought to pray for, as the Prosperity and Peace of our *Jerusalem*, I must remind you of what I have already suggested; That *Jerusalem* is here consider'd by the Psalmist,

Partly, as the Centre of True Religion. And,

Partly, as the Seat of Civil Justice. Accordingly,

First, If we consider our *Jerusalem* as the Centre of True Religion, when we pray for the Welfare and Peace of it, we do in Effect pray for these two comprehensive Blessings.

1. That the vital Interest of uncorrupted Christianity may prevail and flourish among us.

We must beg of God, that the sacred Doctrines of the Gospel may be maintain'd in their primitive Simplicity and Plainness, un-adulterated with any gross Errors or pernicious Heresies, and particularly such as the Romish Church has superadded to the ancient Creeds, to the great defilement and scandal of our common Christianity, and the unspeakable hazard of it's blinded Votaries, who appear to be given up to strong delusions to believe a Lye. 2. Thef. ii. 11.

We must beg, That the *Worship* of God may be preserv'd in its Purity, free from those gross Idolatries and innumerable Superstitions, wherewith the Apostate Church of *Rome* has abominably corrupted it (such as the Invocation of Angels and Saints, the Worship of Images and Reliques, and above all, the divine Honour they so openly pay to that contemptible Idol of the Mass.)

We must beg, That the *Discipline* of Christian Churches may be conform'd to the Model and Directions of his Holy Word; and rendred more effectual to preserve the *Order* and *Purity* of those sacred Societies.

But we are especially concern'd to pray, That the Hearts and Lives of all that profess the Reformed Religion, may be more suitable to the purity of that Doctrine they embrace; That the vital Power of practical Godliness may be more eminently restor'd and diffus'd; That the salutary Grace of God may more effectually teach all those to whom it has appear'd, to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, waiting for the blessed Hope, and the glorious appearance of the great God; and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Tit. ii. 11, 12, 13.

We must in our Prayers, carefully distinguish Scriptural Christianity from all unnecessary Appendages, And much more from all sinful Additions to it; and 'tis this we must pray for the advancement and spreading of. We must beware lest any erroneous and misguided Party-zeal narrow or corrupt our Devotions. Those excellent Petitions in that perfect Pattern of Prayer which our Lord has delivered to us, must be the comprehensive summary of our Desires, Thy Name, O heavenly Father, be hallowed, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven, Matt. vi. 10, 11.

And we are the more concern'd to offer up such Requests as these, because such a sensible revival of practical Christianity among us, is highly necessary to our being at peace with God, without which we can never expect any long Continuance of temporal Safety and Peace. Christian Churches and Kingdoms, as well as particular Persons, are greatly concern'd to stand on good Terms with him, who alone can be their powerful Protector and Guardian. Not only all grievous Defections from the Purity of Christian Faith or Worship, but all prevailing degeneracy from that Holiness of Life which the Gospel recommends, are an hainous Provocation to his pure and jealous Eye. And when such degeneracy becomes so universal, and reigns so uncontroll'd, that no Methods of Judgment or Mercy will prevail to reform a backsliding People, they are in effect in a state of War against Heaven: And in vain will they cry Peace, Peace to themselves, if an offended God speak no Peace to them. We are therefore deeply concern'd to pray, that the great God wou'd not only pardon our most National Guilt, which is so greatly aggravated, but promote among us that National Repentance and Reformation, that may turn away his just Anger from us, and incline him to think Thoughts of Peace towards us, in order to the Planting and Building us on solid lasting and comprehensive Foundations, Jer. xviii. 9. If God be against us, (on the account of our obstinate Impenitency, and our still hating to be reform'd) Who can be for us? What human Power can secure us from the terrible Effects of his incensed Wrath? Whereas, if he be for us, we may send a bold Challenge to all the Enemies of our happy Settlement, and say with the Apostle, Who can be against us? Rom. viii. 31.

2. In praying for the Peace of our Jerusalem, we in effect pray, That there may be a nearer Concord and Union among all sincere Christians in the midst of us.

We may and ought to pray, that there may be a nearer Union of Judgment in all the important Articles of the Christian Faith. But as we must not pray

for an Union of Judgment in the Belief of vain human Traditions, (which is in effect a Conspiracy against Divine Truth) so we cannot pray in Faith for a perfect Agreement in all lesser Opinions, which is not to be expected in this State of Darkness where we only know in part.

We may and should pray, that we may agree in the Observance of all the sacred Institutions of Christ; but we cannot pray in Faith for an exact Uniformity in such unnecessary Rites as have no Tendency to advance the Interest of practical Religion. The rigorous Imposition of such unscriptural and suspected Rites has never promoted, it has long fatally obstructed the Peace of our Jerusalem. It becomes all lovers of Concord to pray, that such unhappy Engines of Division may be remov'd, and that the Terms of Christianity be made the only Terms of mutual Communion.

But we may and ought earnestly to pray, that there may be a nearer Union of Affection among all sincere Protestants, by a large Effusion of a Spirit of Catholic Love; That no remaining differences of Judgment and Practice in lesser Things may alienate our Hearts from one another; That the Envy of Ephraim may depart, Ephraim may no longer vex Judah, nor Judah vex Ephraim. That all the faithful Disciples of our common Lord may be known by that distinguishing Character of their Profession, their mutual Love †. We shou'd with one Heart and † John xiii

one Voice join in their Apostolical Benediction, Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity, Eph. vi. 24. Since in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision avails any Thing, nor Uncircumcision, but a new Creature, (i. e. since neither the bare observance, or non-observance of such external Rites can avail to recommend us to the divine Acceptance, but a Renovation of our Hearts and Lives to the divine Image and Likeness) we shou'd be ready to say with the same Apostle, As many as walk according to this Rule (this truly Apostolical Canon) Peace be on them and Mercy, and on the whole Israel of God, Gal. vi. 15, 16. We should pray, That all who are already united in one Spirit, one Hope of their Calling, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, may be directed to preserve this (truly valuable) unity of the Spirit in the Bond of Peace? (by mutual forbearance as to all other Differences) Eph. iv. 3, 4, 5.

Secondly, Let us consider our Jerusalem as the Seat of Civil Justice and Government.

And when we are requir'd to pray for the Welfare and Peace of it under this Consideration, We are in effect, oblig'd to pray for such Blessings as these:

That the Throne of our King (on whom the Royal Authority is, according to our legal Settlement, most justly devolv'd) may be establish'd in Righteousness; That our excellent Civil Constitution may be preserv'd, in which the Prerogative of the Prince is so happily temper'd with the Liberty of the Subject. That our King who is call'd to Rule over us, may be (according to that excellent Description and Model which the Royal Psalmist gives us of a good Prince) Just, Ruling in the Fear of God; That his Reign may be as the light of the Morning when the Sun riseth, even a Morning without Clouds, (all bright, and calm and serene); and the happy Effects and Fruits of his benign Government may be as the Grass springing out of the Earth by a clear shining after Rain, 2 Sam. xxiii. 3, 4. That impartial Justice and Equity may take Place in all our Courts of Judicature, and from thence run down our Streets like a Stream, and like a mighty Torrent.

We are also here concern'd to pray, That our present publick Tranquility and Peace may be maintain'd in opposition to any hostile Invasion from abroad, or any intestine Divisions and Broils at Home.

We cannot be insensible, That our Popish Enemies abroad will look on our present happy Establishment with a malignant Eye. Their Power has been, of late, rais'd to a formidable height; And their

Preparations in favour of a Popish Pretender have been great and extraordinary, tho' their Design seems, at present, dash'd by this sudden and surprising turn of Affairs. And no doubt, their confident Hopes were greatly heighten'd by the unhappy *Animosities* that were of late fomented among ourselves. Our Enemies have long practis'd that known but wicked *Maxim*, of *dividing*, that they might the more easily destroy us. And, to our great Reproach, they have practis'd it of late Years with uncommon Success. Never was greater Artifice us'd to paint innocent Persons in the most odious Colours. The Press weekly swarm'd with the bitterest *Invectives*, even against Persons of the brightest Character and Merit, till all the *Topics of Railing and Calumny* seem'd exhausted. And who could be so blind as not to see the Hand of *Joab* in these Attempts, to diffuse such a Spirit of Rancour and Hatred? May God, in Mercy, so open the Eyes of all Protestants, that they may, in time, see the Folly and the dangerous Tendency of their party Feuds, and discern the Necessity of uniting their Hearts, and joining their Hands in the Defence of our present Establishment, on which the Security both of the Protestant Religion, and our Civil Liberty so visibly depends! Were we thus united in *Interest and Affection at Home*, we should have comparatively little Reason to fear Attempts from *Abroad*. Were our *Jerusalem* like that in my Text, a *well compacted City*, that enjoys *Peace within her own Walls*, we need not dread any Efforts of our foreign Enemies, to disturb our present Tranquility. And therefore such an Union of our Hearts, with respect to our common Interest, is a Blessing we should earnestly pray for, in order to the securing us from any new Confusions, which the Enemies of our Peace would gladly throw us into.

Thus you see what is compriz'd in that *Peace of our Jerusalem* we are oblig'd to pray for.

I proceed now to consider,

II. In what *Manner*, and from what *Principles* we should offer up such Prayers, that they may be acceptable and successful.

And here I would briefly suggest a few Particulars.

1. We should offer them up with deep Humility, and with a penitential frame of Heart.

We must be *great Strangers in our Israel*, if we are not deeply sensible of our manifold National Sins, that might justly provoke a righteous God to abandon us from his Protection. And indeed, when we take a serious Review of them, such distinguishing Favours of a kind Providence extended to a People so utterly unworthy of them, and that have done so much to obstruct them, may justly astonish and surprize us. We are Wonders of Divine Mercy in our own Eyes: And when we look back on the Precipice we have escap'd, we are *like them that dream*, and may say with the *Psalmist*, *The Lord hath done great Things for us, whereof we are glad*, *Psal. cxxvi. 1, 2, 3.*

The dangerous progress of barefac'd Infidelity, the dreadful Prevalency of daring Irreligion, and of all manner of Immorality, the woful Defection and Degeneracy of the rising Age, (even among the Posterity of God's faithful Servants) the wretched Contempt of the glorious Gospel, and the general Barrenness of those that attend the Dispensation of it as to the genuine Fruits it should have produc'd, our stupid Ingratitude for former Deliverances and woful Misimprovement of them, Our trecherous Dealings both with *God and Men*, are all Sins of a deep Dye, whereby we have done much to forfeit that blessed Light of reform'd Christianity we yet enjoy: I might also add, that those bitter unnatural Animosities, that for some Years past, have so unaccountably reign'd and raged among us, have justly deserv'd such an awful Judgment, as God's sending our *Enemies* themselves to be our *Peace-makers*, and his casting us a-

gain into the common Furnace of Affliction, to melt us down into a better Temper toward one another. I shall not enter into the Detail of the particular Faults of any particular Party: I wish that all Protestants would descend into their own Hearts, reflect on their own particular Guilt, and humble themselves for it, and turn from it; that we may not provoke a gracious God, to repent of all that Good which the present Aspect of his providential Dispensations gives us so comfortable a Prospect of. 'Tis the Prayer of such humble and sincere Penitents that God will still mercifully regard and hear, as he has hitherto so remarkably done.

2. We should offer up such Prayers with a fervent Zeal for the Glory of God.

The more our Prayers are animated with this divine and noble Principle, the more pleasing they will be to him, who can act for no higher End than his own Glory. All Arguments drawn from this Topic, are like to be most prevalent with him. We never plead more successfully with him, than when we adopt the Spirit and Language of pious *Joshua*, *Lord, What wilt thou do to thy great Name?* *Josh. vii.*

9. The less we have of any private Views, or particular Interests in our Eye, and the more we have the Advancement of God's Honour and Interest, and the real Welfare of Sacred and Civil Societies at Heart, the more are our Prayers conform'd to the Will of God, and consequently entitled to a gracious Audience from him. And that leads me to add,

3. We should offer up such Prayers from a Principle of Catholick and Comprehensive Love.

I mean such a Love as prompts us as Christians, to wish and seek the Welfare of the Universal Church of Christ on Earth, and particularly of that Part of it which is planted in these Kingdoms: And which prompts us, as Members of Civil Societies, to wish and seek their real Prosperity as a publick Good, that is far preferable to any particular Interest of our own.

As *Christians*, our Love must not be confin'd to any narrow and self-distinguish'd Party; to Christians of this or that particular Denomination; to those *within or without* the Pale of a National Establishment. It should extend to all in whom we discern a credible Profession of the Essentials of the Christian Faith, and of real Holiness of Life; to all in whom we behold the amiable Image of our common Lord, tho' they may not have the particular *Inscription* of this or that subdivided Party, (that perhaps are discriminated from others, by nothing that belongs either to the Being, or the Well-being of the Church of Christ). We should beware of that blind and misguided Zeal that makes so many mistake *different Names*, drawn from Mens Differences in disputable Matters, for the *Marks and Characteristicks* of so many different Religions. We should, from a Principle of enlarg'd Charity, have a sincere Concern for the Welfare of all our *Brethren and Companions*; (and we should reckon all those to be such, that are related to the same God and Saviour, and that are our *Associates* in the same divine Faith and Hope); and for their sakes we should say concerning our *Jerusalem*, *Peace be with thee*, *Psal. cxxii. 8.*

As *Members of Civil Societies*, we should evidence a truly publick Spirit by a generous Concern for the common Good.

The genuine Spirit of true Religion carries an equal Opposition to *Slavery* on the one hand, and licentious *Anarchy* on the other. It will prompt us to wish, with the *Psalmist* in my Text, *That Peace may be within our Walls*, (by the just maintenance of our Civil Properties and Rights, against the Encroachments of illegal and despotic Violence,) and yet *Prosperity within our Palaces*, (by the support of the Legal Authority and Rights of our Princes, and our subordinate Magistrates). And no Nation can be more truly happy than that wherein the Ballance is stedfastly kept.

kept up between the Prince's just Dominion, and the People's Liberty; and where the Seats of Judgment are a safe Sanctuary from all Injustice and Oppression. Happy is the People that are in such a Case. And a sincere Desire of seeing those Civil Communities, to which we belong, thus happy, must inspire all our Prayers for them.

4. All our Prayers of this kind must be offer'd up from a steady Affiance in the Divine Power and Mercy.

Should we rather put our Trust in an Arm of Flesh than in God's invisible Power, it were just with him to blast all the Props of our human Confidence. Our Confidence should be plac'd in that Lord Jehovah, in whom there is everlasting strength. Our Prayers to him are no better than a Mockery of him, if we rely more on any external Means of our Security and Defence, than on his Almighty Protection, whose Name alone is our strong Tower, and impregnable Shield. Let us then look up to the God of Jerusalem for this comprehensive Blessing of Peace. 'Tis he has the Heart of our King in his Hand to direct him to Counsels and Measures most conducive to the Good of this great People committed to his Care. 'Tis he has the Hearts of his People in his Hand, to unite them in loyal Duty to so excellent a Prince, and in cordial Affection to one another. 'Tis he has the Hearts of our Enemies in his Hands, and can either oblige them to be at peace with us, or turn all their (subtle and mischievous) Counsels against us into Foolishness. And all our Prayers must be animated with a firm and lively Faith, in the Conduct of his Sovereign Providence, who alone can compleat this great Work which he has begun.

I come now,

III. To suggest to you, what Motives and Encouragements we have thus to pray for the peace of our Jerusalem.

And among many others that might be mention'd, I shall only touch on the following ones.

1. To pray for the peace of Jerusalem, is a Duty that we are always oblig'd, and now more especially call'd to.

'Tis a Duty God has bound upon us by his sacred Authority. It can never be unnecessary or unseasonable.

But 'tis a Duty we are now call'd to by his special Providence. The Protestant Interest both at Home and Abroad, The Liberties of Europe as well as of these Lands, have such a visible Connexion with our present happy Establishment, as should excite us to the most earnest Application to the great God, That he would perfect his own Mercy to us, and utterly frustrate the Designs, and extinguish the Hopes both of our open and secret Enemies.

2. The Peace of Jerusalem is a Blessing worth praying for.

Those are no Friends to our Jerusalem, consider'd as the Center of true Religion, who do not cordially wish for the sensible Revival and more extensive Diffusion of practical Christianity: And who do not earnestly desire the nearest Union and Concord that can be expected among the sincere Professors of it.

And those are no Friends to our Jerusalem, consider'd as the Seat of publick Justice and Government, who wish not the prosperous Reign of a Prince, on whom and his Race, our Laws have settled the Crown; whom the unanimous Voice of his People has, (by their Representatives in Parliament) call'd to the Possession of it; in whose Person all those Royal Vertues shine with the brightest Lustre that can give us the surest Prospect of being safe and happy under his Government, and whose Interest, as well as Inclination it is, to maintain our admirably modell'd Frame of Civil Government, and to render us a prosperous and flourishing People. Those are our most dangerous Enemies, who would throw us into new Confusions to make way for an at-

tainted Pretender; nurtur'd from his Infancy in a Court, where the Liberties and Consciences of the Subject are enslav'd to the arbitrary Will of the Prince, and where Tyranny and Persecution go hand in hand, and reign uncontroll'd.

We have therefore great Reason to beg of God, that he, who gives Salvation to Kings, would deliver ours from the hurtful Sword: That he would rid and deliver us from the Hands of strange Children, whose Mouth speaks Vanity, and whose right Hand (stretched out in taking those Oaths they never design'd to keep) is a right Hand of Falshood; that our Sons may be as Plants grown up in their Youth; that our Daughters may be as Corner Stones polish'd after the Similitude of a Palace; that our Garners may be full, affording all manner of Store; that our Sheep may bring forth thousands and tens of thousands in our Streets; that our Oxen may be strong to Labour; that there be no breaking in (by a foreign Invasion) and no going out, (into a miserable Captivity) and no Complaint in our Streets (on the Account of Injustice and Oppression). Happy is the People that is in such a Case; yea, happy is the People whose God is the Lord. And this Happiness we wish, when we pray for the Peace of our Jerusalem.

3. Prayer is God's appointed Means to obtain this comprehensive Blessing.

Many are the Encouragements that he has given us to Prayer by his Promises of a gracious Audience. For he has not said to the Seed of Jacob, seek ye me in vain.

And many a time have we found by happy Experience, that the fervent effectual Prayer of the Righteous has been available with him, James v. 16. I cannot to this purpose forget, that a solemn Exhortation and Call to this Duty of Prayer, with reference to our then hazardous Circumstances, had some time ago its rise in this City, and, I believe, met with a general and ready Compliance among sincere Protestants both in this Kingdom, and that of Ireland. I cannot but look on those Wonders of a kind Providence we now behold, as a signal Answer to those Prayers. And what the great God has done seems to be an Omen and Pledge of greater things he will yet do for us, if such a Spirit of Grace and Supplication be still pour'd out. And O may those that are set as Watchmen on the Walls of our Jerusalem never hold their Peace Day or Night! May those that make mention of the Lord (or, his Remembrancers) never keep silence! May they give him no rest, 'till he establish and make his Jerusalem a Praise in the whole Earth! Isa. lxii. 6, 7.

4. Such Prayers for the Peace of our Jerusalem, will draw down a special Blessing on ourselves.

And this leads me to consider the Motive and Encouragement particularly mention'd in the Text, They shall prosper that love thee.

Some Critics understand the Words as a devout Wish, May those prosper that love thee! And indeed we cannot sincerely pray for the Peace of our Jerusalem, without wishing well to all that have her valuable Interest truly at Heart.

But I shall choose rather to follow our Translators, who understand them as an Assertion, that suggests a strong Encouragement to this excellent Duty, Those shall prosper that love Jerusalem.

We are sure that those Principles from which such Prayers shou'd spring, (viz. A Zeal for the Glory of God, an extensive Charity towards Man, a disinterested Concern from the Publick Good) are highly acceptable to God. He looks on such as are animated by them with a pleas'd Eye, as the living Images of himself here below.

'Tis indeed true, that we cannot expect, that the Piety of such unfeigned Lovers of God's Jerusalem, shou'd be always crown'd here with temporal Prosperity. Many have earnestly pray'd for the Peace of God's Jerusalem, who have never liv'd to see it, of share in the present Advantages of it. But even their

Prayers have been accepted, and shall be liberally rewarded. It has, and shall always in the Issue, go well with such. And their sincere Petitions shall have a gracious Answer, tho' (for wise Reasons of Divine Providence) it may be some time delay'd. They shall at least by their Righteousness deliver their own Souls, Ezek. xiv. 14.

But yet God is often wont to set a special Mark of his Favour here on such as bear such a cordial Affection to his Jerusalem. For such as ardently pray for her Peace, He remembers them with the Favour that he bears to his People. He visits them with his Salvation. He grants them to see the good of his Chosen, that they may rejoice in the gladness of his Nation, and may Glory with his Inheritance, Pl. cxi. 4, 5.

However we are sure, that such as love God's Jerusalem on Earth, shall have their happy Lot and Place in the City of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; and shall be the happy Associates of the innumerable Company of Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect there, Heb. xii. 22, 23. And that is a Reward infinitely beyond all temporal Prosperity.

I shall conclude this Discourse with reminding you, that while we pray for the Peace of that Part of God's Jerusalem which is planted in these Lands, we shou'd not forget in our Prayers those mournful Parts of God's Jerusalem abroad, that still continue under deplorable Desolations. And we need look no farther than France for a Spectacle that shou'd deeply affect our Hearts, and excite our tenderest Compassion. There we behold God's Sion lying still in miserable Ruins. And sure, when we see so many once flourishing Churches laid waste, their faithful Pastors banish'd, their Flocks entirely scatter'd, their Temples ras'd, all publick Exercises of the reform'd Religion suppress'd, so many illustrious Confessors confin'd to Prisons and Convents and Gallies, so many Children violently torn from their affectionate Parents to be brought up in Popish Delusions and Idolatry, and so many forcibly dragg'd to the Romish Altars, and compell'd by barbarous Cruelties to a forced Abjuration of their Faith; we cannot look on their Calamities with

dry Eyes and unaffected Hearts. We have great Reason therefore to offer up our incessant Prayers for their happy Restoration after their so long continu'd Sufferings. And we may plead with God in the Language of the Prophet, O Lord of Hosts, how long wilt thou not have Mercy on Jerusalem, and on the Cities of Judah, against which thou hast had Indignation for so many Years? Zech. i. 12. We may bespeak him in the Language of another Prophet, Hast thou utterly rejected Judah? Hath thy Soul loathed Sion? Why hast thou smitten us, and there is no healing for us? We looked for Peace, and there is no good; and for the time of Healing, and behold Trouble, Jer. xiv. 19. The last Words seem but too applicable to the Disappointment that the poor Protestants of France have twice met with, in our Treaties of Peace with their unrelenting Oppressor.

And truly, when I consider the aggravated Guilt of that grand Persecutor, under whose Yoke they still groan; I am not without Hopes, that a gracious God will, in due time, shake it off from their Necks; and as they have had long occasion for that mournful Complaint of the Church of old, Many a time have they afflicted me from my Youth, may Israel now say, many a time have they afflicted me from my Youth, the Plowmen have plough'd on my Back, they have made long their Furrows; so they shall have occasion to add, That they have not (finally prevail'd; but God has been righteous, in cutting asunder the Cords of the Wicked, Plal. cxxix. 1, 2, 3, 4. He that has so wonderfully preserv'd the Light of Reform'd Christianity in these Lands, can as easily give it a glorious Revival, where his Enemies have with so implacable a Rage endeavour'd the utter Extinction of it. Nay, as the Iniquities of Mystical Babylon, (in whose Skirts the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus is found) are come to a great Height, so we may hope they will, at last, come up in Remembrance before God, in order to the Execution of his righteous Judgments in her Destruction. The Period of their Antichristian Empire, according to the most judicious Calculations, seems neer expir'd. And 'tis upon the Downfall of it, we must expect, that God will bless his Jerusalem every where with an universal and durable Peace. Amen.

SERMON



S E R M O N

Preach'd at *London Derry*, June 24. 1722

To my Reverend Brethren the Presbyterian Ministers in the North of
IRELAND.

Reverend and dear Brethren,

AS the following Sermon was preach'd at *London-Derry* during the fitting of your last General Synod there, so I remember that many of you that heard it (both Subscribers and Nonsubscribers) earnestly desir'd the Publication of it, as hoping it might have some influence towards reviving that Spirit of Christian Love, which your unhappy Differences had too much abated. I then indeed declin'd complying with your Request, because I hoped the Resolutions your Synod came to, wou'd lay a Foundation for the revival of Love and Peace, and render such a Persuasive to it less needful.

But since the Animosities occasion'd by a difference of Judgment relating to the Point of Subscription seem to be rather increas'd than allay'd; and especially since there is ground to fear, that a Project is set on foot by some to push Matters to an open Rupture, by pressing for a Declaration of Non-Communion with all the Non-subscribing Ministers among you; I have thought more seriously of the forementioned Request, and apprehend that a Discourse on this essential of Christianity is now more seasonable and needful than ever. And I am the rather induc'd to publish it, because my present Weakness after a late dangerous Fever that threatned my Life, puts me out of any capacity of contributing otherwise to promote pacifick Counsels among you.

As my late Distemper brought me to the Brink of the Grave, so it gave me occasion for serious Reflections on my past Conduct. And I can truly say, that my poor Endeavours in conjunction with my Reverend Brethren that were Correspondents from hence, to promote healing, and to oppose divisive Measures, have afforded me much inward Satisfaction and Peace in the Review. And I hope we may appeal to yourselves, that as we appear'd among you under no other Character than that of Peace-makers, so we have not acted unsuitably to it, but endeavour'd the Preservation both of Truth and Love among you. But for the Design now so much fear'd of carrying Matters to an open Breach of Communion, I take it to be so directly opposite to our Saviour's New Command
of

of mutual Love among his Disciples, which this Sermon is intended to recommend the observance of, that I was the more willing by the Publication of it to bear my Testimony (how inconsiderable soever) against so uncharitable and divisive a Project. For that mutual Love which our Lord so strictly enjoins, and has made the very Badge of our Discipleship, does certainly oblige us to mutual external Communion (as occasion offers) with all those Christian Pastors and their Flocks, that appear in the Judgment of rational Charity found in the Faith; whose way of Worship is in our own account conformable to the Word of God; and who put no Bar in the way of our Communion by imposing such Terms of it, as our blessed Lord never authoriz'd them to require or prescribe. All such are evidently bound by this grand Law of Love *to receive one another* (to mutual Communion) *as Christ has received them to the Glory of the Father*, Rom. xv. 7. We have here in this part of the Kingdom a different Method for the Admission of Intrants into the Ministry from what your General Synods have appointed. (And what we have found by the Divine Blessing a sufficient Barrier against Heresies or dangerous Errors.) But God forbid that we should declare Non-Communion with you, or you with us on the account of that Difference. That open Rupture which such a Declaration of Non-Communion with the Non-subscribing Brethren among you must issue in, must be attended with such woful and mischievous Consequences as prudent Men cannot but foresee, and every good Man will lament. Can it be a pleasing and desirable Prospect to any that are animated by a Spirit of Christian Love, to see the Congregations of so many useful and faithful Labourers in our Lords Vineyard rent and torn? To see the Members that desert them, and those that may still adhere to them, inflam'd with bitter Animosities and Heart-burnings against one another? And perhaps a new Plague of Dissention and Disaffection diffusing itself between such subscribing Ministers as any vote for, or vote against, such a Declaration of Non-Communion? And even this Dissention spreading itself among their several Congregations? (As tis to be fear'd such seeds of it are already sown as will then plentifully spring up.) Can so deplorable a Scene as this be so pleasing to any that behold it, as to Satan the divider of the Brethren? Will the Interest of Christ, or of that Spirit of Discord be the Gainer by it? Can we think of approving ourselves to the God of Peace, by having any hand in such woful Work?

I humbly beg and obtest my dear Brethren to put a favourable Construction on the freedom I use in representing my Sentiments to them; And that they will impute it to no other Principles, but a cordial zeal for the Preservation of Love and Peace among you, pursuant to your former pacifick Resolutions, and a deep Concern for our common Interest, which will suffer great Reproach by such an open Breach of Communion. And I cannot but hope from your Piety and Wisdom, that you will disappoint the Hopes of those that would triumph in your Divisions, and the Fears of those that have the Interest of Religion among you truly at heart, by your vigorous Opposition to all Measures that tend to such a scandalous and mischievous Rupture. And I can assure you, that all my Brethren here concur with me in their earnest Desires that such a fatal Rupture may be prevented. And that the Direction and Blessing of the God of Light and Love may attend your mutual Consultations, shall be the earnest Prayer of

Reverend and dear Brethren,

Your very affectionate Brother

and Servant in our

common Lord,

J. BOYSE.

S E R M O N XXXIII.

Preac'd at *London-derry*, June 24, 1722.

JOHN xiii. 34, 35.

34. *A new Commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, That ye also love one another.*
 35. *By this shall all Men know that ye are my Disciples, if ye have love to one another.*

THE Words of truly excellent Persons who have Death and Eternity in their View, are wont to make a deep and durable Impression on our Minds. And this Consideration should recommend to us these remarkable Words of our Blessed Lord, and add a great Weight to them. For they were spoken by him, *When his Hour was come that he should depart out of this World unto the Father*, and when he foresaw the near approach of his own Sufferings and Death. They are a part of his Farewel-Speech to his Disciples, and contain his Dying-Charge to them. *A new Commandment I give you, That ye love one another, &c.*

The Subject of our present Meditation lies plain before us, viz.

For the Disciples of Christ to love one another, is his new Commandment to them, enforc'd by the Example of his own Love to them, and made the Badge of their Christian Profession.

In speaking to this Subject I shall distinctly consider,

First, What is imply'd in the Commandment it self, *That we should love one another.*

Secondly, What is imply'd in its being call'd a *new Commandment*.

Thirdly, I shall consider the *Argument* here us'd to enforce it that is drawn from *the Example of his Love to us*. And,

Fourthly, How justly is it made the *Badge and Cognizance* of our Discipleship.

First, I shall consider, What is imply'd in the Commandment it self, *That we should love one another.*

And to clear this, We may distinctly consider the *Objects* of our Love, the several *Acts* included in it, and the *Principle* from whence it flows.

I. We may consider the *Objects* of our Love.

Who those are will appear, if we observe, That our Lord speaks to, and of such as were his Disciples, who had embrac'd his heavenly Doctrine, and taken his gracious Yoke upon them.

There is indeed a Love of *Good-will* which we should bear to all Men, as they are God's reasonable Creatures. Every Man must be consider'd as our Neighbour, nearly ally'd to us as we are all the *Offspring of God the Father of Spirits, who has made of one Blood all Nations to dwell on all the Face of the Earth*. Acts xvii. 26, 28. And therefore should be

lov'd as ourselves. And this Love of *Good-will* must be even extended to our *Enemies*, in imitation of our heavenly Father, *who makes his Sun to rise on the Evil and on the Good; and sendeth his Rain on the Just and the Unjust*. Matth. v. 45.

But tho' this is a Duty which our Lord does elsewhere often and earnestly urge on all his Followers; yet the Love here injoin'd is the *special Love* that should be found among all his *Disciples*, consider'd as such. A Love that those are incapable of being the Objects of, in whom nothing of that amiable Image of his appears, that is the peculiar Ground of it. For our *Discipleship* itself is that which should unite our Hearts in the Bonds of this special mutual Affection. 'Tis a Debt we owe to all those who in the Judgment of rational Charity, *love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*. 'Tis their unfeigned Faith in that Blessed Saviour, their chearful Subjection to his Authority, and Obedience to his Commands, and their conformity in Holiness to that excellent Pattern that he has set before us, that must recommend them to our pure and fervent Affection. 'Tis their Resemblance to their heavenly Father, and the bright Characters of his regenerate Children that appear to be instamped upon them, that must indear them to us, and render them peculiarly amiable in our Eyes. And wherever we behold this divine Image instamp'd, it must attract our Hearts. And we must beware lest our Ignorance or Uncharitableness should narrow the Objects of our Love. For all, that we have reason to hope, are the living Members of Christ, and the Objects of his special Affection, must be imbrac'd in the Arms of our catholick and comprehensive Charity. And even those Relicks of Ignorance and Weakness, of culpable Infirmary and Corruption, that exclude them not from being Objects of the Love of Christ, should not shut them out of ours. Our Charity, like his, should cover a multitude of Failures, wherever a conscientious Sincerity appears. But this does not hinder our proportioning the Degree of our Love to the Degree of true Amiability in our fellow Christians. Where the Rays of the divine Image shine the brightest, they ought to kindle the strongest ardour of Affection in us.

Having thus briefly consider'd the Objects of our Love, I proceed,

II. To consider the several *Acts* that are included in it.

I. Our Love imports, our high peculiar Esteem of them. Our Blessed Lord gives them such Characters as shew the peculiar Value he has for them. They are styl'd a *chosen Generation, a Royal Priesthood,*

hood, an holy Nation, and a peculiar People. 1 Pet. xi. 9. And they shou'd be in our Account, the excellent Ones of the Earth. Pf. xvi. 4. The Blessed God speaks of them, as his Children, his Jewels, his peculiar Treasure and Heritage, and a kind of First Fruits of his Creatures to him. 1 James xviii. And much more shou'd they be honourable in our Eyes. To one whose Breast is inspir'd with this divine Love, a sincere Disciple of Christ, tho' cloth'd with Rags, is more glorious in his Account than the most prosperous Sinner tho' cloth'd in Purple and Scarlet. He has an higher Veneration for those, whom God has chosen from the corrupt Mass of Mankind as *Vessels of Honour*, and adorn'd with the Graces of his Holy Spirit, than for any wicked Sensualists, tho' swimming in Wealth, and glittering with all the Marks of secular Honour.

2. Our Love to the Disciples of Christ imports our Delight in Communion with them as such.

Our Communion with them in the Belief of the same divine Truths, in the same instituted Duties of Religion, in the same Course of holy Obedience, in the same glorious heavenly Hope, shou'd be the most satisfying Pleasure of our Lives, and unspeakably more cement our Affections, than our being link'd in the same secular Concernments and Interests can do. *One Day spent in God's Courts with them shou'd be better to us than a thousand elsewhere*; And we shou'd prefer being Door-keepers in his House before dwelling in the most pompous Tents of Wickedness. Pf. lxxxiv. 10. Those shou'd be our most desirable Company on Earth, with whom we hope to dwell for ever in Heaven. And to such the religious Converse of holy Souls, and especially their joyning with united Hearts in the Solemnities of God's publick Worship, is the sweetest Pledge and Foretast of Heaven. And they long for, they rejoyce in nothing more, than the Hope of their making up a part of the *General Assembly and Church of the First-born*, that shall convene in the heavenly Jerusalem, and there celebrate the Praises of him that sits on the Throne, and of the Lamb for ever.

3. Our Love to the Disciples of Christ imports a sincere Fellow-feeling with them in their Sorrows and Joy.

The Love of common Friendship often so unites the Hearts of Men, that they have as it were one common Interest, and affected with each others Case as if it were their own. Much more shou'd Divine Love so cement the Affections of the Members of Christ, as to enable them to resent the Pain or Ease of their Fellow-members as if it were their own. And their Love therefore shou'd express itself in rejoycing with them that rejoyce, and weeping with them that weep. Rom. xii. 15. *In remembering them that are in Bonds, as bound with them; and them that suffer Adversity, as being ourselves in the Body.* Heb. xiii. 3. Especially the general extensive Concernments of the Church of Christ shou'd lie near our Hearts; and the Success or Declension thereof shou'd deeply affect us. We shou'd prefer the Welfare and Peace of Jerusalem before our chief Joy; and sooner forget ourselves, than raise the Thoughts of her Afflictions and Distresses out of our Minds. Pf. cxxxvii. 5, 6. There is no Interest of our own that our Hearts shou'd be so anxious about as for the Ark of God. So far as we are Acted by this divine Principle, we cannot be unconcerned Spectators, either of the Declensions or Afflictions of the Churches of Christ, or their unhappy Contentions and Divisions, that tend to extinguish or greatly abate their mutual Love. Much less can we indulge our sensual Jollity and Mirth, while their extream Calamities or Dangers call for our Prayers and Tears. Amos vi. 6. *Neb. i. 3, 4.* We shall rather say as the Apostle Paul, *Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?* 2 Cor. xi. 29. Once more,

4. Our Love to the Disciples of Christ imports our Readiness to do them good according to our Ability.

As our Love to the Brethren must be Unfeigned, 1 Pet. i. 22. So its Sincerity must appear in the real and genuine Effects of it. And tho' Others shou'd not be excluded from some share in the Fruits of our beneficent Love, yet our Fellow-Christians shou'd have the Preference, pursuant to that Apostolical Direction, *As we have Opportunity, let us do good to all Men, but especially to them that are of the Household of Faith,* Gal. vi. 10. And indeed our pretended Love to our Fellow-Christians, if destitute of these Fruits, when we have real Ability for them, is but a barren Compliment and hypocritical show. And so 'tis justly censur'd by the Apostle James in those vain Pretenders to Christianity, who when they saw their Brethren naked and destitute of daily Food, wou'd say to them, *Depart in Peace, Be ye warm'd, Be ye cloth'd, but gave them not the Things needful for the Body,* putting them off with good Words instead of good Deeds, James ii. 15, 16. And we may observe, That when our Saviour gives us an Account, of the solemn Process of the Day of Judgment, he ranks those among the Wicked that should go into Everlasting Punishment, who gave him no Meat when hungry, nor Drink when thirsty, nor cloth'd him when naked, nor visited him when sick and imprison'd; And when they deny the Charge, he gives them this remarkable Answer, *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to the least of these, ye did it not to me.* (See Matth. xxv. from the Forty-first Verse to the End.) We must shew our Love to the Disciples of Christ, by giving them faithful Advice in their Difficulties, by ministring Comfort to them under their Afflictions and Sufferings, by Reproving and Admonishing them when faulty, by Forgiving their Offences as we desire that ours may be forgiven, by condescending to their Weakness, by bearing with their Infirmities, by exercising Forbearance towards them under their involuntary Mistakes, by supporting their just Credit when sullied by false Aspersions, by relieving their pressing Necessities when we are able, by bearing their Burdens, Gal. vi. 2. and thus fulfilling this Law of Christ. Where this Love reigns in our Hearts, all fit Occasions will be freely and readily lay'd hold on and improv'd by us, for such excellent and necessary Duties as the genuine Effects of it.

I proceed now,

III. To consider the Principle from which this Love to the Disciples of Christ should spring.

What that Principle is, we may learn from the Text. For as the Love of Christ to us is made the Exemplar of and Motive to our Love to one another, so 'tis imply'd thereby, That our Love to one another must flow from our superior Love to him: For 'tis our superlative Love to the blessed Jesus, who is the Image of the invisible God, in whom the Fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and in whom all the Divine Perfections shine with the most attractive Glory; 'Tis our Affection to those Divine Truths and Precepts that he has reveal'd, and to that excellent Design of Advancing the Glory of God in the Salvation of Men, that must endear to us all his Followers, whose enlightned Souls are possess'd with the same affectionate and adoring Thoughts of him; and in whose Minds and Hearts his sacred Truths and Laws are engraven, and who bear a Conformity to him their blessed Head and Lord by a Christ-like Spirit and Conversation. As the Ground of our Love to the Children of God, is his Image stamp'd upon them, so our Love to his Living Images must spring from that superlative Love we bear to him the glorious Original, the true Source and Centre of all amiable Excellencies. And hence the Apostle John makes our Love to God the sure Test and Mark, whereby we shou'd try the Sincerity of our Love to the Brethren. *By this we know that we love the Brethren, because we love God, and keep his Commandments,* John i. 52. And as our Love to our Fellow-Christians has its rise from that higher Principle of our Love to our com-

mon Lord, so accordingly they are more lovely in our Eyes the more we can discern in them of his own amiable Likeness, and Resemblance.

Having thus briefly consider'd the Command that our Lord here gives his Disciples to love one another, I now proceed,

Secondly, To consider, Why 'tis call'd a New Commandment.

'Tis a Commandment; Not a bare Advice which we are left at Liberty whether we will follow it, or not. 'Tis a Command of Christ, the only Lawgiver of his Church, inforc'd upon us by his Sovereign Authority. And 'tis at our utmost Peril that we despise or disobey it. And the latter part of the Text gives us an awful Intimation, That our Blessed Lord will disown us as none of his, if we have not this Mark and Badge of our Discipleship.

And 'tis here call'd by him, A New Commandment.

'Tis by no means hereby imply'd, That the Saints under the Old Testament were not oblig'd by the Divine Law to love one another. The Apostle John obviates any such Mistake when he calls it both an Old and a New Commandment, 1 John xi. 7.--- The same Command may admit of diverse Enactments, Inforcements and Motives (as a judicious Expositor suggests) and be accordingly styl'd either Old or New. 'Tis an Old Commandment from the beginning of the World, and founded on that invariable Reason, That he who loveth him that begat, shou'd also love him that is begotten of him, and bears his amiable Image, John i. 1.

'Tis a New Commandment, partly with respect to the New Description and Character given of the Objects of our special Love. All good Men were oblig'd before to love one another under the Character of the Children and Servants of their heavenly Father; They are now oblig'd to love one another under this new additional Character of the Disciples of Christ, the Members of that Mystical Body of which he is constituted the glorious Head.

'Tis a New Commandment inforc'd upon us by the Authority of Christ as our Lord by the Right of Redemption, and by the additional Obligation that is thereby lay'd upon us to obey him.

'Tis a New Commandment, as it is inculcated upon us by new Motives and Arguments, that greatly strengthen and inforce all former Obligations to this Duty. Such Motives as were never before so fully reveal'd and set in so clear a Light. 'Tis like an Old Law new reviv'd and more strongly inforc'd. And this leads me.

Thirdly, To consider the Argument or Motive here us'd to inforce it, viz. The Love of Christ to all his Disciples, That as I have loved you, That ye also love one another.

I need not caution you against so gross a Misinterpretation of these Words as to imagine, that the Example of Christ's Love to us, is in every respect imitable by us in our Love to one another. We cannot be substituted in the stead of one another as a Propitiation for Sin, as he was in Ours. We can give none of our Fellow-Christians so costly an Evidence of our Love to them, as he did of his to us. Nor can our most fervent Affection to them be so beneficial as his Love was to us. And in such Respects as these, his Example is no way imitable by us.

But Christ's Love to his Disciples suggests these Two powerful Motives and Arguments to induce them to love one another.

1. Even those Instances of his Love to us that are unimitable by us, do yet strongly oblige us to love one another.

He so loved us, as to give himself for us, Gal. ii. 20. This good Shepherd so loved his Sheep as to lay down his Life for them, John x. 15. He so loved us, as to give himself for us, an Offering and a Sacrifice to God of a sweet smelling Savour, Eph. v. 2.--- He so loved us, as

to wash us from our Sins in his own Blood, and to make us Kings and Priests to God and his Father, for which we ought to ascribe to him Glory and Dominion for ever, Rev. i. 5, 6.

'Tis true, we are utterly incapable in this sense and respect of loving one another. But our Blessed Lord may be consider'd as inforcing our Obedience to this New Command from these inimitable Instances of his Love in some such Language to us as this.

" You are my Disciples, I have so loved you, as
" to give my invaluable Life a Ransom for yours.
" I have shed my precious Blood as the costly Price
" of your Redemption. I have thereby acquir'd a
" just and unquestionable Title to all the Obedience
" and Service you can pay to me. If then you have
" any just Sense of your unspeakable Obligations to
" my Dying Love; If you desire and hope to share
" in the infinitely beneficial Fruits of it; shew your
" grateful Affection to me, by Obeying my Command-
" ments, and especially this New Commandment I give
" you of loving one another. This is one great Proof
" and Evidence I expect of your superlative Love to
" my self. This is one most suitable and acceptable
" Return I expect for that matchless and unexampled
" Love I have shown to you, in reconciling you to God
" by my Death, that your Hearts may be united to
" one another in the Bonds of mutual Amity and
" Affection. I command, I charge you as you value
" my Dying Love, that you love one another with a
" pure Heart fervently.

And, my Brethren, shall not so powerful, so in-
dearing an Argument as this, come with great
Weight upon all your Consciences? Can you, dare
you resist the persuasive Force of it? Shou'd it not
move, shou'd it not melt you, into the tender Em-
braces of all that you are bound in reason to believe
and hope, That they love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity,
as ever you expect that your Blessed Redeemer shou'd
receive you into his.

2. Those Instances of Christ's Love to his Disci-
ples which are imitable by us, carry a powerful Mo-
tive to become conformable to the Pattern that he hath
set before us.

We may observe several Instances of his Love in
his Conduct towards his Disciples when he convers'd
with them here on this Earth.

His whole Life indeed was a continued Exercise of
compassionate Love to the Bodies and Souls of Men:
'Tis most justly said of him, That he went about doing
Good, Acts x. 38. But he shew'd his Love to his
Disciples, in his unwearied Diligence and Care to in-
struct them in the Mysteries of the Kingdom of God;
In his suiting his Instructions to their low and weak
Capacities, and delivering Divine Truths as they
were capable to bear it; In his pitying them under
their manifold Infirmities and Mistakes; and using
the most gentle and tender Methods of rectifying
their Judgment; In his just Vindication of them
when falsely slander'd and accus'd; In his seasonable
Admonitions and Reproofs to them when faulty; in
his tender Sympathy with them in their Afflictions
and Troubles; and ministering suitable Consolations
to them under their despondent Fears, and Dejection
of Mind; In his approving and accepting all Instances
of their Fidelity and Duty; In his Condescension to
the lowest Offices of Love, even in washing his Disci-
ples Feet, John xiii. In his constant Care while he
was with them in the World, to keep them in his Father's
name from the Evil of it, that none of them might be
lost; And in recommending them to his heavenly Fa-
ther's Care and Protection, when he was ready to de-
part out of the World. (see his Prayer for them,
John xvii.) And as he thus lov'd his own in the
World, he lov'd them to the End, John xiii. 1. And
he still continues his Love to them in his State of Ex-
altation, In his Intercession for them, In his having a
fellow-feeling of their Infirmities, In succouring them un-
der their Temptations, In making merciful Allowance
T t t for

for their lamented Failures, and involuntary Mistakes; In watching over them with a tender Care, and carrying on the great Work of their Salvation, till Grace be compleated in Glory.

In some such Instances shou'd we manifest our Love to our fellow Christians.

We shou'd as we are capable promote their Improvement in Divine Knowledge and their Progress in real Sanctification: We shou'd by our mutual Exhortations *provoke one another to love and good Works*; We shou'd *warn the unruly, Comfort the feeble minded, Support the weak*; *We that are strong shou'd bear the Infirmities of the Weak, and not to please our selves, but to please our Neighbour for his good to Edification*, Rom. xv. 12. *For even Christ pleased not himself*, ver. 3. We shou'd be ready to vindicate their injured Innocence, and to wipe off the unjust Reproches cast upon them. We shou'd put the most favourable Construction on their Words and Actions that they can reasonably bear; We shou'd make due Allowance for their Mistakes and the Imperfection of their present Knowledge, and for their unhappy Prejudices and Passions, as conscious that we may need some Allowance to be made for our own. We shou'd be ready to exercise the same Forbearance towards them under lesser Differences of Judgment and Practice that we expect our selves. We shou'd willingly stoop to the lowest Offices of Love towards them. We shou'd even *restore such as are overtaken with a Fault, with a Spirit of Meekness, considering ourselves, lest we also shou'd be tempted*. We shou'd be ready to recommend their Cause to God in our fervent Prayers for them. And I may add one more surprizing and extraordinary Instance of Love which the Apostle John mentions, *Hereby perceive we the Love of God to us, because he lay'd down his Life for us. And we ought to lay down our Lives for the Brethren*, 1 John iii. 16. Thus shou'd the same Mind (towards our Brethren) be in us that was in him; Thus shou'd we walk in Love, as he loved us, Eph. v. 2.

And, my Brethren, We shou'd be strongly induc'd thus to imitate the Example of Christ's Love to us in our mutual Love, by considering, That 'tis the Example of that Blessed Jesus, whose Disciples and Followers we profess to be, and to whose Example (as far as 'tis imitable by us) we are oblig'd to conform ourselves. And we in vain pretend to abide in him, if we do not make it our Study thus to walk (in Love) as he walked, 1 John ii. 6. 'Tis an Example which all the indearing Obligations of love that he has laid upon us powerfully recommend to our Zealous Imitation. 'Tis an Example, which if we are sincerely studious to follow, It will be a comfortable Evidence to ourselves, That we belong to him. *For we know (saith the Apostle John) That we have passed from Death to Life, because we love the Brethren*, 1 John iii. 14. And again, *Beloved, Let us love one another, For Love is of God; And every One that loveth, is born of God, and knoweth God*, 1 John iv. 7.

But this leads me,

Fourthly, To consider, How justly this Love of Christ's Disciples to one another is made a Badge and Cognizance of our Christian Profession.

By this shall all Men know (saith our Lord) That ye are my Disciples, if ye have Love to one another.

I have already suggested, That our unfeigned Love of our Christian Brethren is a solid Evidence to our selves of our being the sincere Disciples of Christ. 'Tis so, when we fervently love them on the Account of that Resemblance they bear to him, when we highly esteem them on that Score, when we delight in Communion with them, when we have a Fellow-feeling with them in their Sorrows and Joys, and when we are ready to exercise all Acts of brotherly Kindness and Love to them in our Power; and especially when all this Love to them springs from our superlative Love to that blessed Saviour whose Dis-

ciples and Members we account them to be, because of the Resemblance they bear to him.

But these Words of our Saviour seem chiefly to intimate, That this mutual Love among his Disciples shou'd be the *distinguishing Badge*, by which they shou'd be known to all others, That they belong to him. This is as it were the *Livery* that he intended his Servants shou'd wear, and thereby manifest to all whom they own'd as their Lord and Master.

And it will appear to be a proper *Badge and Livery* for this Purpose, if we consider that no human Institution lays such obligation on those that are under it to mutual Love, as the Gospel of Christ. No human Society is knit together by so firm and endearing Bonds of mutual Affection, as the Christian Church. For besides that the Gospel of Christ does most frequently and earnestly inculcate this Duty on all that profess to believe it; besides that it presents such a peculiar Pattern for our Imitation, as the matchless and unparallel'd Love of it's blessed Author to us; it does also suggest to us the strongest grounds of mutual Love. The Members of human Societies are usually united in Affection, by being united in Civil and Temporal Interests. But the Disciples of Christ have much more valuable Bonds of Union to cement their Hearts in mutual Love. They are Members of the same *Mystical Body*, animated by the same *Holy Spirit*, call'd in *one hope of their (high and Heavenly) calling*, subjected to the Authority of *one Lord Redeemer*, united in that *one Faith*, (once deliver'd to the Saints in those Holy Scriptures, that are able to make them wise to Salvation, and thoroughly furnish'd for every good Work) united in their Consent to *one Baptismal Covenant*, and related as Children to *one God and Father of all*, by whom they are adopted into his Family, and made Heirs of his Heavenly Kingdom. And their Union in such honourable Relations, in such spiritual Privileges, [in such great and eternal Interests, lays them under the strongest Obligations, and is the most powerful Incitements to mutual fervent Affection. And therefore, nothing cou'd be a more proper Cognizance of their Discipleship than that mutual indearing Love which their Religion lays so just a Foundation for. For no Ties can be imagin'd more firm and sacred than these, to bind their Hearts in indissoluble Affection to each other.

It remains, That we make some practical Reflections on this Subject.

Is it the New Commandment of Christ to his Disciples to Love one another, Is it peculiarly inforc'd upon them by the Example of his own Love to them, and appointed by him as the distinguishing Badge of our Christian Profession? And

I. This gives us just Occasion to Lament and Reprove that notorious Breach of this great Command, and that woful Defectiveness in the observation of it, that is at this Day visible among those that wear the Christian Name.

How directly opposite to Christian Love, is that monstrous Uncharitableness of the Roman Church, in confining Christianity to their own degenerate Sect, and denying Salvation to all that own not all the pernicious Corruptions in Doctrine Worship and Discipline which their Trent-Council and Creed would impose on the Christian World! Which is in effect to damn all that adhere to the Simplicity and Purity of the Gospel, and dare not joyn with them in all their Errors, Idolatry, Superstition and Tyranny whereby they have defac'd our common Christianity! How much more opposite to Christian Love is that blind but wicked Zeal that has prompted them to propagate these Corruptions by a series of barbarous Persecutions, and to imbrue their Hands in the Blood of so many thousand faithful Martyrs of Christ, and sincere Worshipers of him! If mutual Love among its Members be the Badge of the true Church of Christ, gross Uncharitableness, and hatred and bloody Cruelty,

Cruelty, looks more like the Mark and Cognizance of an Apostate and Antichristian one, even of *Mystical Babylon* that is represented as drunk with the Blood of the Saints, and with the Blood of the Martyrs of Jesus, Rev. xvii. 6.

Nor can we reconcile with Christian Love that malignant Rage that has hurried so many Professors of the Reformed Religion to treat their Brethren with Hatred, and with methods of Violence and Severity, on the Account of their Non-compliance with such human Constitutions, as were both unnecessary, and even hurtful Additions to our common Christianity.

And 'tis as truly opposite to this Command of mutual Love, when those that agree in all the important Truths and Duties of the Gospel of Christ, suffer their Differences of Judgment or Practice in matters of little Moment, and wherein the Interest of Vital Practical Christianity is little concern'd, to alienate their Affections from one another, and to abate that fervent Love which the great Things wherein they are happily United, shou'd be sufficient to cherish and maintain. For in eager Contests about such Matters, on whether Side soever the Mistake lies, yet if we have no Reason to believe that such Mistakes will exclude them from the Love of our common Lord, it will be no Way pleasing to him that we shou'd on the Account of them withdraw our cordial Affection from them. We are here in a State of Imperfection where the best of us *know but in Part*; and consequently where some Difference of Apprehensions in more dubious Matters seems unavoidable. And 'tis on the Prospect thereof, that our blessed Lord and his Apostles have so frequently recommended and inculcated the great Duties of mutual *Forbearance* and *Love*. And sure we shou'd never think these Duties *unreasonable*, if we were duly conscious of the weakness of our own Understandings, and the defectiveness of our own Light. We need the Charity of others to cover our own Errors and Failures, and shou'd extend the like to theirs. Our blessed Lord overlooks many involuntary Misapprehensions and Mistakes in his upright Servants, and so shou'd we. We shou'd be therefore notwithstanding such lesser Differences, ready to *Receive one another* (in the Arms of cordial Love) *as God for Christ's sake hath received us*, Rom. xv. 7. And if we do otherwise, we greatly sully this common Badge of our Christian Profession, and greatly fail in our observance of this New Commandment, and too much overlook the strict Obligation that the Example of the love of Christ to us has laid upon us to love one another.

And give me leave, my Brethren, with all plainness and faithfulness to apply this to the particular Case and Circumstances of both Pastors and People in this Part of our Lord's Vineyard. There has been some difference of Judgment and Practice among your Pastors, in reference to that voluntary Subscription which the Synod of the preceding Year allow'd, but did not injoin. This has produc'd bitter Contentions and Animosities, grievous Suspicions and Jealousies, and thereby too visible an Alienation of mutual Affection both in Ministers and their People. But shou'd not Christian Charity prompt you to believe that your Pastors in their different Practice of *accepting* or *declining* that voluntary Subscription then allow'd, acted according to their best Judgment; those on the One side, from a Zeal for securing what they apprehended to be divine Truth, and for the prevention of dangerous Errors; those on the other, from a just Regard to Christian Liberty, and Veneration for the Holy Scriptures as the only unerring Standard of Divine Truth, and a strong Conviction of the mischievous Effects that the making human Decisions the only Tests of Orthodoxy has produ'd in the far greatest Part of the Christian Church, to the visible prejudice

both of Truth and Love. I shall not at all take on me to determine, on whether Side the Arguments are the strongest, but content my self with suggesting, That so much may be offer'd on either Side, as we may in rational Charity suppose capable to lead Men of real Integrity to different Apprehensions, and a different Practice, according to their different Sentiments. Whatever Faults there may have been on the one Side or the other, in giving any handle for these unhappy Debates, or in the Management of them, I wish they may be buried in Oblivion. But can such a Difference justify our violation of this great Command of mutual Love and Communion? And tho' this mutual Love does not oblige us to Acts of External Communion, where any sinful Terms of it are requir'd; yet it does oblige us thereto, where there is an entire Agreement both in all the important Doctrines of the Gospel, and in that way of Worship which we all judge conformable to the Rule of the Gospel. And now shou'd those that declin'd the Subscription allow'd, argue; The practice of my Brethren that subscrib'd, was different from mine; therefore I will have no external Communion with them, I will not countenance and encourage them, by assisting them in the Work and Service of our common Lord; wou'd this be no violation of this Law of Love that our blessed Lord has injoin'd to *Pastors*, as well as *private Christians*? Do but turn the Tables, and the Argument is as strong on the other side. And 'tis as applicable to private Christians. Should any such argue, my Minister has subscrib'd, therefore I will no longer hear him, or communicate with him; because according to my Apprehensions he shou'd have declin'd it; Does any Man think such a Person wou'd act conformably to this Law of Love, and to that excellent Rule of the Apostle, That *we shou'd know* (or own) *them which labour among us, and are over us in the Lord, and admonish us, and esteem them very highly in Love, for their Works sake. And be at peace among yourselves.* Turn the Tables once more, and consider whether the Argument wants any of its force and Strength on the other side. Shou'd not a Person argue thus, my Pastor preaches the same Truths of the Gospel, and inculcates the same Duties of practical Holiness, that he had done long before these Debates about the point of Subscription were ever started, he has made no innovation in the manner of Worship, he is as diligent in every part of his ministerial Work as ever, and his Conversation is as exemplary and becoming his ministerial Character and Profession as before: And what reasonable Ground then can I have to withdraw my Esteem and Affection from him, and to sadden his Heart and weaken his Hands, by dissenting his Ministry, and (as far as my Example can influence) renting his Congregation. Wou'd this be acting conformably to this new Commandment of Christianity, by which faithful Pastors are entitled to the love of their Flocks, as well as private Christians to the Love one of another? I am not here reasoning against the liberty of private Judgment, but am only persuading Men to endeavour to get their Judgments rightly inform'd, lest a Zeal not directed by sound Knowledge, should mislead them to act contrary to the indispensable Obligations of this grand Law of Love, and of that mutual External Communion which it obliges us to, where there are no sinful Conditions as a Bar in our Way.

I would therefore gladly revive that mutual Affection and Christian Amity among you that your late Contentions have gone so much (I will not say to extinguish, but I may say) greatly to abate.

There is, blessed be God, a Foundation laid for the Revival of mutual Love in the *Resolutions* your Synod has come into in reference to those Members of it, whose Sentiments in the Point of Subscription differ'd from that of their Brethren. And if all in
T t t 2 your

your several Congregations wou'd act conformably to what has been by the Synod so earnestly recommended to them, we may hope to see the threatening Flame quench'd, your divided Affections cemented, and your late uncomfortable Animosities conquer'd and subdued by a prevailing Spirit of mutual Forbearance and Love. We may hope that the *Unity of the Spirit* among you will be still preserved in the *Bond of Peace*. And may all invidious Names of Distinction among you be buried in Oblivion! May all the Gifts and Graces that your Pastors are adorn'd with, in dear them to their Flocks, and to one another! May all of them conspire with one Mind and Heart to promote the common Interests of their great Lord and Master! May the unspeakably more important Matters wherein they are happily agreed be a sufficient Bond of their Union in Love! And may our mournful Lamentations over their late Contentions be turn'd into joyful Praises for the Prospect we have of a desirable Concord and Peace!

II. Let me hence enforce this *New Commandment* of Christ, on all of you that profess to be his Disciples, *That ye love one another*.

O let this Excellent Badge of our Christian Profession be more visible among us! Let us get our Hearts moulded into that sincere Love of our Fellow Christians by which our Blessed Lord wou'd have us to be distinguish'd as his Disciples; And let us see that our Love answer the Description given of it.

Let us love a *Disciple of Christ* in the *Name* and under the *Character* of a *Disciple*. Let their Relation to him, Their Faith in him, and Love to him, and Conformity to his Image, be sufficient to render them the Objects of our Affection. Let their Union with us in *one Spirit, one Heavenly Hope, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father*, be sufficient to unite our Hearts in the Bonds of Love. Let us need no other Bonds than these sacred Ones to knit our Affections. Let all that appear in a Judgment of rational Charity to be the Children of our Heavenly Father, and the living Members of Christ, be on that Account dear to us. Let that *divine (or god-like) Nature* that shines in them, render them amiable and honourable in our Eyes. Let us love whatever appears of real Piety and Holiness in them, tho' clouded with lesser Errors of Judgment, and with many culpable Infirmities, which our Blessed Lord will mercifully overlook, and so shou'd we. When we consider the Objects of our Love, the Enquiry must not be, whether they bear the particular Inscription of this or that self-distinguishing Party or Denomination, and their Judgment agree exactly with ours in every dubious Opinion in which the best of Men may differ; But whether they bear the Image of our Common Lord? If they embrace the necessary Articles of our Christian Faith, If the *Salutary Grace of God has taught them to deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to live soberly righteously and godly in this present World, looking for the blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearance of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ*; If we find such *Evidences of their Discipleship*, We must be ready to say with the Apostle Paul, *As many as walk according to this Rule, Peace be on them, and Mercy, and upon the whole Israel of God*, Gal. iii. 15. 16. Let us beware of that mistaken Zeal that wou'd weaken Christian Love by contracting the common Interest of Christianity.

And let us see, that the Expressions of our mutual Love be real and sincere. Let us honour those Gifts and Graces wherewith our Lord adorns any of his Members. Let us delight in the Communion of his Saints on Earth as ever we expect to converse with them for ever in the heavenly Mansions. Let us Esteem our Opportunities, of frequenting the Courts of God with them, attending the Solemnities of his publick Worship, and communicating at his Holy Table, the most valuable Privileges we enjoy on this

side Heaven. Let us sympathize with all that are Members with us of the same mystical Body. Especially let the *Peace or Troubles of Jerusalem* have the chief Share of our *Joy and Sorrows*. And let the *Calamities of our Afflicted*, or the *Divisions of our contending Brethren*, give them an Interest in our fervent Prayers.

And those of our Christian Brethren with whom we converse shou'd not find our Love an empty Notion or barren Compliment. Let the Reality and Sincerity of it appear by suitable Effects. Let it open our Hearts and Hands for their seasonable Relief. *Let us as we have Opportunity, do good to all, but especially to them that are of the Household of Faith*. Let us improve all Advantages of promoting their Spiritual and eternal Welfare. And study to become as far as we are capable Followers of that Blessed Jesus, who *went about doing good*, Acts x. 38.

And to enforce this Duty, I must refer you to what I have already spoken concerning the Obligations that both the positive *Command*, and the glorious *Example* of Christ have laid upon you to the Practice of it. And shall only now subjoin the following Motives.

1- Consider, That Love to the Disciples of Christ is mention'd as a most Essential and vital Part of true Christianity.

You may observe to this Purpose, That the Apostle Paul mentioning those three comprehensive Graces of Faith, Hope, and Charity gives the Preference to the last. *Now abideth Faith, Hope, Charity, but the greatest of these is Charity, (or Love.)* 1 Cor. xiii. 13. And tho' I doubt not that Charity or Love there necessarily includes Love to our God and Saviour, yet that it includes Love to all our Fellow-Christians, is evident from the large and excellent Description that he gives of it. *Charity suffers long, and is kind; Charity envieth not; Charity vaunts not itself, is not puffed up; Doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, never faileth.* And O that these noble Characters were more deeply engraven on the Hearts of all the professed Disciples of Christ, and more visible in their Conduct and Carriage towards one another! And I am sure, it should excite all of us to the utmost Care that our Spirit and Behaviour be suitable to them, when we consider that awful Passage wherewith the Apostle prefaces this Description of Charity, (or Love.) *Too! I speak with the Tongues of Men and of Angels, and have not Charity, I am become as sounding Brass, or a tinkling Cymbal. And tho' I have the Gift of Prophecy, and understand all Mysteries, and all Knowledge; and tho' I have all Faith, so that I could remove Mountains, and have no Charity, I am nothing. And tho' I bestow all my Goods to feed the Poor, and tho' I give my Body to be burned, and have not Charity, it profits me nothing.*

2. Consider, That the Prevalency of this mutual Love among the Disciples of Christ would be the *Strength and Glory* of Christian Societies.

It would be their *Strength*.

Differences of Opinion and Practice in reference to some dubious Matters wherein Christianity is very little concerned, are unavoidable in this State of Darkness and Imperfection. But where the Ignorance, the Follies, and the unreasonable Passions and imperious Pride of Men mix themselves with them, they often produce most unhappy Effects, and kindle a dangerous Flame, which wise and good Men lament, but find it hard to extinguish. The most effectual Remedy (if the Passions of Men would but admit of it) is the revival of that Christian Love, that would instruct us notwithstanding those considerable Differences to unite our Hearts and Endeavours to promote those great and undoubted In-

terests of Christianity wherein we are happily agreed, and which should be infinitely dearer to us.

Mutual Love would be the *Glory* as well as the *Strength* of Christian Societies.

How illustrious were the extraordinary Effects of it in the first Christian Church at *Jerusalem*, mention'd in *Acts* xi. 44, 45. when it could so far destroy all selfishness in them; as to persuade them to sell their Possessions, and bring them into one common Stock! And tho' this be a Pattern that succeeding Ages are not oblig'd to follow; yet it may serve to shew the Vigour of that noble Principle it sprung from. How honourable a Character was that which the mutual Affection of Christians, extorted from their Heathen Enemies in *Tertullian's* time, when they cry'd out with Wonder, *Behold, How the Christians love one another!* And what an indelible Reproach has it been to their Christian Profession in latter Ages, when it might be often rather said, *Behold, how they revile and hate one another!* Christian Societies, whose Members are animated by this vital Principle of Christian-like Love, and united in the same Faith and Holiness, and the same glorious heavenly Hope, are a beautiful Model of the heavenly Community above. By such Christianity is recommended in its amiable Lustre and Beauty, as the *Grand Law of Love*, enacted by that Saviour and Lover of Souls, who was himself the greatest Gift and Demonstration of Divine Love, and the *brighest Exemplar* of it.

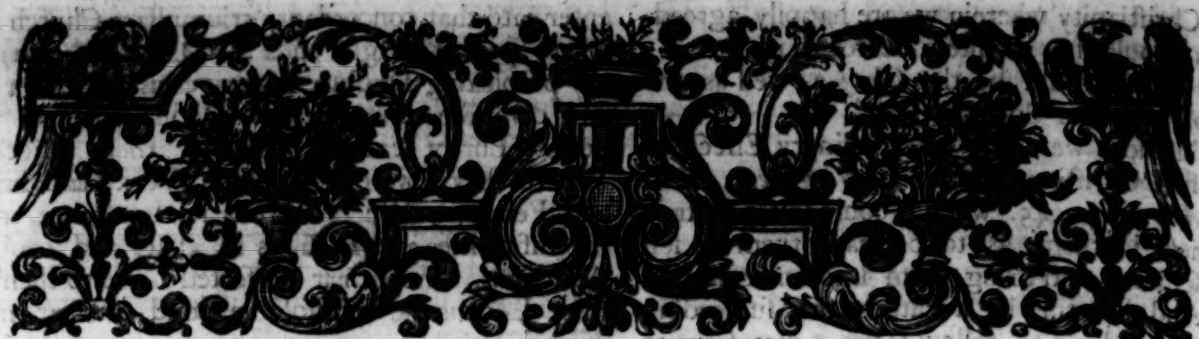
3. Consider, That the prevalency of this mutual Love among the Disciples of Christ, is a most suitable Preparation for the Heavenly Society and State.

Heaven is a State of perfect Light, and of perfect Love. And our Love to those Saints on Earth, that are the living Images of their God and Saviour, will help to raise our Affections to those blessed Inhabitants of Heaven, in whom that Image shines with a spotless Beauty, which, in those here below, is obscur'd with many Remains of Ignorance and sinful Infirmary, that are so many Blemishes in it. This Principle of Love will wean our Affections from this Earth, where so great a part of it is overspread with Pagan, Mahometan, or Jewish Infidelity, where so great a part of the Christian Church is so deeply degenerated from the primitive Simplicity and Purity of our holy Religion; and where among the Reformed Churches themselves, partly through the Imperfection of their present Light, and much more thro' their irregular Passions and Pride, Christian Love seems almost to be extinguish'd, or at least, to be under a woful Declension and Decay. What considerate Christian would not then long for Heaven, to

enter into that concordant, triumphant Church there, where perfect Light ends all Differences, banishes all perplexing Doubts, and gives us at once a clear and comprehensive View of Divine Truths; where perfect Purity entirely cements their Affections; Where they have one common Work, and Interest, and Felicity; Where there is no Ignorance, no sinful Infirmities and Passions to abate and cool their Affections, where their perfected Love to their common Lord is the indissoluble Bond of their mutual eternal Love!

There, I doubt not, that *Luther* and *Calvin*, and many that have since been denominated from their being the Followers of the different Sentiments of these two excellent Reformers, will have blissful Communion with their Saviour, and most entirely amicable Converse with one another; and those of them whom a misguided Zeal has incited to treat their Brethren with bitter Invectives and uncharitable Censures will fully discern the Weakness and Folly of their Conduct therein. There those that have agreed in all the important Truths of the Gospel, but contended about the Methods of securing them, will see reason to be asham'd of their Contentions, and of the miserable and mischievous Effects they have produced. There good Men will see reason to put away many Mistakes in lesser Matters, that their Ignorance or servile addictedness to the Opinions of those whose Judgment they too much revered and over-valued, has betray'd them into as childish Thoughts. There many will joyfully meet and embrace in Heaven, that were ready to avoid and disclaim external Communion with one another on Earth, or were at continual Strife and Variance in their way thither. And how should this Consideration make all the sincere lovers of Christ, who are weary of these uneasy Contentions and Animosities among his Disciples here, think with pleasure of that Land of *Light* and *Love* that we are Expectants of! To that blessed State of sinless Purity, and perfect Peace, should our Souls aspire with earnest Longings and Desires. There only a perfect Harmony of Judgments and Affections is to be found. There in God's immediate Light we shall see perfect convincing Light. There all the Flames of Contention, that misguided Zeal has kindled, will be extinguish'd. There that excellent Petition that our Lord offers on the behalf of his Disciples, will receive its full Accomplishment, *That they all may be One, as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be One in us.* And this should be here, and will be for ever the Centre of a blessed and perfect Union for ever.





Preach'd on the 23d of October, 1718.

THE P R E F A C E.

“ **I** Have endeavour'd in the ensuing *Discourse*, to make good against the Guides of the
 “ *Romish Church*, the Charge of their Setting up another Gospel (*πας*) besides that
 “ which we have receiv'd from Christ and his inspir'd Apostles. And 'tis a strong Pre-
 “ sumption, that they are themselves conscious of the Truth and Justice of this Charge
 “ when they shew such a violent Aversion to the People's Reading the Written Gospel of
 “ Christ, in order to their comparing it with the *Romish Faith*. Those *Maxims* of our
 “ Blessed Saviour carry their own Evidence along with them, Every one that doth Evil,
 “ hateth the Light; neither comes to the Light, lest his Deeds shou'd be reprov'd (or dis-
 “ cover'd) But he that doth Truth, cometh to the Light, that his Deeds may be made manifest, that they are
 “ wrought in God. John iii. 21. And the *Maxims* are as applicable to Matters of Faith, as to those of Pra-
 “ ice. If the Gospel was designedly written for the perpetual Instruction of the Christian Church, in all the
 “ successive Ages of it, And if the *Romish Faith* be entirely agreeable to it, Why shou'd the Guides of the
 “ *Romish Church* be so terribly afraid of the Disciples of Christ, having a free Liberty of perusing his own
 “ Testament, in Order to their understanding the Mind and Will of the gracious Testator, which they them-
 “ selves are highly concern'd to know and fulfil, in order to their enjoying the precious Legacys that are there-
 “ in bequeathed to them, What shall we think then, when Propositions, barely asserting the Right and Ob-
 “ ligation of all Christians, to Read this Written Gospel of Christ, are branded by the present Pope as Damnable
 “ Heresies?
 “ And this leads me to give a brief Historical Account of that Bull, or Constitution of the present Pope
 “ call'd, *Unigenitus*, which has made so much Noise in the World, but which is too little understood and re-
 “ garded, in a Matter, that all who reverence and esteem the Written Gospel of Christ, are highly con-
 “ cern'd in.
 “ The Design of the Pop's Bull, publish'd Anno Dom. 1713. was to condemn a great number of Pro-
 “ positions, contain'd in a Book, publish'd by Father *Quesnell*, Entitled” *The New-Testament* in French,
 “ with Moral Reflections upon every Verse, &c. Or, an Abridgment of the Morality of the Gospel, the Acts of
 “ the Apostles, the Epistles of St. Paul, the Canonical Epistles, and the Revelations; Or, Christian Sentiments on
 “ the Texts of the Holy Books. “ Out of this Book of Father *Quesnell*'s, the Pope has call'd out One Hundred
 “ and One Propositions, and pass'd that severe Censure upon them, which I shall hereafter mention. Most
 “ of these Propositions express the common Sentiments of those call'd *Jansenists*, relating to the Efficacy of
 “ Divine Grace, Some to the Invalidity of unjust Excommunications, And one to the Practice of Making Oaths,
 “ so common in the Church. These Propositions I shall not at present concern myself about, as having no
 “ particular Reference to my present Purpose, which is only to take Notice of those Propositions in Father
 “ *Quesnell*'s Book, that relate to the Reading of the Holy Scriptures, and which the Pope in this Bull has
 “ thought fit to Condemn. And they are Verbatim, these that follow.

PROP. 79. 'Tis profitable and necessary in all Times, all Places, and for all sorts of Persons to Study and know the Spirit, Piety and Mysteries of the Holy Scriptures.

PROP. 80. The Reading of the Holy Scriptures is for all.

PROP. 81. The Sacred Obscurity of the Word of God, is no Reason for the Laity to dispense with themselves in the Obligation of Reading it.

PROP. 82. The Lord's Day must be Sanctify'd by Christians with the Reading of Pious Books, and above all of the Holy Scriptures. It's Mischievous to think of withdrawing a Christian from the Reading thereof.

PROP. 83. It's an Illusion to persuade on's self, that the Knowledge of the Mysteries of Religion must not be imparted to Women, by Reading of the Sacred Books. The abuse of Scripture and Heresies are not sprung from the Simplicity of Women, but from the proud Knowledge of Men.

PROP. 84. To snatch the New-Testament out of the Hands of Christians, or to keep it Shut to them, by depriving them of the Means of understanding it, is to Shut unto them the Mouth of Christ.

PROP. 85. To forbid Christians the Reading the Holy Scriptures, especially of the Gospel, is to forbid the use of Light, to the Children of Light, and to make them suffer a sort of Excommunication.

On these Propositions (among the rest) the Pope passes his Censure in the following Words.

“ Wherefore having heard the Judgment of the Cardinals, and other Divines aforesaid, which they deliver'd to us, both in Word and Writing, and having specially implor'd the Assistance of Divine Light, by appointing Private,

" Private, and also Publick Prayers for that End, We do by this our unalterable Constitution, Declare, Condemn
 " and Reject respectively, ALL and EVERY ONE of the Propositions aforesaid, as False; Captious;
 " Sounding ill in, and Offensive to Pious Ears; Scandalous; Pernicious; Rash; Injurious to the Church
 " and her Practice; Contumelious, not only to the Church but to the State; Seditious; Wicked; Blas-
 " phemous; Suspected of Heresie; and also favouring of Hereticks, Heresies and Schism too; Erroneous;
 " bordering upon Heresy; and in fine also, HÆRETICAL, &c.

" And in this Constitution, he Commands the faithful of both Sexes, that they presume not to HOLD, Teach,
 " or Preach otherwise concerning these Propositions, then is contain'd in this Constitution. Infomuch, as whoever
 " shall Teach, Defend or Publish them, or any of them, Joyntly or Severally, or shall treat of them by way of
 " Dispute, Publick or Private (unless to impugn them) shall, ipso facto, without any other Declaration, incur
 " the Church-Censures, and be obnoxious to other Penalties appointed by Law, against such Delinquents. He
 " farther forbids the Printing of the said Book of Father Quesnell's, and forbids every one of the Faithful the Read-
 " ing, Transcribing, Keeping or Using it [The most effectual way of Confuting it] under the pain of Excommu-
 " nication, to be incurr'd, ipso facto. He further requires his Venerable Brethren, Patriarchs, Archbishops,
 " Bishops, and other Ordinaries, and also the Inquisitors of Heresy, that by all Means they restrain and reduce
 " whosoever shall Contradict or Rebel against this Constitution, by the Penalties and Censures aforesaid, and the
 " other Remedies of Law, and Fact, even by calling in (if need be) the Assistance of the Secular Power.

" And he thus concludes this remarkable Bull, " Let no one then infringe or audaciously oppose this our Declaration,
 " Condemnation, Prohibition and Interdict; And if any one presumes to attempt this, Let him know that he shall
 " Incurr the Indignation of Almighty God, and that of his Blessed Apostle Peter and Paul. Given at Rome
 " at St. Mary Major's, in the Year of our Lord, 1713. the 6th, before the Ides of September, and the 13th,
 " Year of our Pontificate.

J. Card. Prodatarius.

F. Oliverius.

Visa de Curia L. Sergardus.

Register'd in the Office of the Briefs,

L. Martinettus.

" This Bull or Constitution of the Pope's, has rais'd very great Disturbances in France. The Contests about
 " the Acceptance of it began in the Reign of the late Lewis the 14th. who (as the Pope himself intimates in
 " his Bull) did incite him to publish it (as several Bishops of France did the like) and after it was publish'd,
 " discountenanc'd those French Prelates that appear'd unwilling to Accept it. The Contest has risen to a
 " much greater Height, since the Regent's Government, under the present young King. The Pope has at
 " several times publish'd new Briefs and Decrees, to enforce the Acceptance of his Constitution, and herein re-
 " fus'd all the Modifications and Explanations that have been offer'd by those of the French Prelates, that op-
 " pos'd an Unlimited Acceptance of it. But finding that by all these renewed Attempts, he could not gain
 " his point, of bringing these refractory Prelates (with whom several of their Clergy appear'd resolv'd to joyn)
 " to an absolute Submission to his Constitution, and that they seem'd inclin'd, if he still refus'd the Explicati-
 " ons they offer'd, to Appeal from his Judgment to that of a General Council; He has at last ventur'd up-
 " on a bold Step, to publish his Letters of Separation, against those that have not accepted his Constitution,
 " Dated September 8. 1718. These Letters of Separation, the Pope directs to all Patriarchs, Archbishops, Bi-
 " shops and other Prelates, exhorting them to separate their Sheep from the Poyson'd Pastors, and to per-
 " swade those Rebels [*i. e.* those that refus'd an unlimited Submission to his Bull] to return to the Unity of
 " Doctrine: And if they do not, to look upon them as entirely excluded from the Charity and common Fel-
 " lowship of the Church, and entirely to abstain from Communion with them. And these Letters of Sepa-
 " ration not only extend to those that entirely refuse to Accept the Pope's Constitution, but to those that were
 " unwilling to accept it without such Modifications and Explanations as they had offer'd. And therefore the Car-
 " dinal de Noailles, in his Appeal, thus complains. " Instead of the Explications, which the Necessities of the
 " Church required, we have seen appear Decrees of the Inquisition, whereby several Mandates of the Bishops of
 " France have been dishonour'd, in a manner injurious to the Episcopal Dignity; Divers Briefs, wherein it is decla-
 " red, That the Constitution is so clear, that it needs no Explications. Wherein the Right of Judging (either before
 " the Pope, or after the Pope) Questions of Faith, is contested with the Bishops, altho' that Right be annex'd to
 " their Character, by divine Institution; and wherein they would reduce the Bishops to the simple Quality of Execu-
 " tors of the Decrees, of the Sovereign Pontiffs, to whom they should be oblig'd to submit with a blind Obedience.
 " They are forbid to depart from the Letter of the Constitution. And 'tis pronounced, That to demand Explications,
 " is to deliver up themselves to a Criminal Curiosity, It is to eat of the forbidden Fruit.

" And whereas these refractory Bishops had the presumption to think, That they were the proper Judges
 " (at least *primo instanti*) concerning Doctrines published in that Kingdom, whether they were agreeable to
 " what they call the Catholick Faith, or Heretical, The Pope in these Letters of Separation checks their Va-
 " nity, by declaring to them, " That they should learn from the Apostolick See, what they ought to believe, what
 " to hold, and what to teach. That to this See, they should direct their Writings to be examin'd and corrected, that
 " they may from thence receive the Light of the Catholick Faith, where the Faith itself can have no defect. That St.
 " Peter speaks by him: And none of them should defend his own Opinion against the Authority of St. Peter.

" In opposition to the Pope's Letters of Separation, The Cardinal de Noailles, (who had drawn up his Ap-
 " peal, April 3. 1717.) has now publish'd this Appeal to the Judgment of a General Council, September 8.
 " 1718. The Dean, Chapter and Canons of his Metropolitick Church, joyn with him, so do the Doctors of
 " the Sorbonne. And 'tis suppos'd, that several other Bishops and their Clergy will follow this laudable Ex-
 " ample. Against this Sentence of the Pope, the Parliament of Paris had admitted the Appeal of the King's
 " Attorney-General, and forbidden the Receiving, Reading, or Publishing and Executing, this last Decree of
 " the Pope.

" Having given this brief Historical Account of this remarkable Constitution of the Pope, and of his
 " Excommunicatory Letters, against such of the French, Prelates and Clergy, as still stand out against the unli-
 " mited Acceptance of it, I shall take the Liberty to make a few Reflections thereon, so far as the Constitu-
 " tion refers to the forecited Propositions in Father Quesnell's Book, wherein he asserts the Right and Obliga-
 " tion of all Christians, to read the holy Scriptures.

" 'Tis justly observ'd by the French King's Attorney General, in his Speech to the Parliament of Paris,
 " that the Maxims advanc'd in the Pope's Letters of Separation, against those that refuse an absolute Submis-
 " sion

“ sion to his *Constitution*, are evidently found on his *Claim of Infallibility*. 'Tis from his *See* (he tells them) they are to learn what to believe, what to hold, and what to teach. From thence they are to receive the Light of Catholick Faith, WHERE THE FAITH CAN HAVE NO DEFECT. That St. Peter speaks to them by him, and no Man must set up his Opinion against the Authority of St. Peter. And it is on this Pretence that he demands such an *unreserved* and *entire Obedience* to his Constitution.

“ Now either the *Pope* is in the right, in this *Claim of Infallibility*, and consequently of an *Absolute Submission* being due to his *Constitution*: Or, He is not.

“ If he is in the Right, in his *Claim of Infallibility* and consequently of *Absolute Authority*, to the Decrees, whereof an *Unlimited Submission* is due, Then those *Prelates* and *Clergy* must be in the Wrong, who do not entirely resign up their Judgments to his, and who refuse to *Condemn* these *Propositions* which he has so solemnly declar'd to be *Heretical*, and on this Supposition, the *Pope* justly Styles them *Rebels*, for not subjecting their Judgment to that of his unerring Tribunal. They truly deserve the *Censures* pass'd upon them, and are highly concern'd to repent of their past Disobedience to *Christ's Infallible Vicar*, and to beg his charitable Absolution. And whatever complaints they may make of some irregularity in the manner of the *Pope's* proceedings, or his Contravention therein to some *Canons*, The want of such *Formalities* as these, is but a poor and lame Defence against the Decisions of an *Infallible* and *Sovereign Judge*, that has a rightful Dominion over the Faith of the Catholick Church; and to whose *Authority*, the *Prelate* and *Clergy*, as well as *Laity*, owe an *Absolute Subjection*.

“ But if on the other Hand, the *Pope* is in the wrong, in his *Claim of Infallibility*, and *Absolute Authority*. If this Principle of the *Pope's Infallibility* be (as the French King's Attorney General tells us in his Speech) contrary to the Decisions of famous Councils (such as those of *Constance* and *Basil*) and of the most illustrious *Popes*; If this Principle of the *Ulera-mountain Authors* (as the same Gentleman calls the *Italian Defenders* of the *Papal Infallibility*) be generally disown'd and rejected in *France*, as prejudicial to the precious Liberties of the *Gallican Church*; If the *Cardinal de Noailles*, and other *Prelates* and *Clergy*, that adhere to his Appeal, do truly regard the *Pope's Pretensions* to *Infallibility*, and *Absolute Authority*, as false and unjust: Then, tho' I cannot but applaud their Courage and Constancy in refusing that *Unlimited Submission* to the *Pope's Constitution*, that he demands: Yet I wou'd (with all due Deference and Respect) suggest to them, that they ought in all Reason, upon this important Occasion, to go much farther; for since the *Pope*, notwithstanding all their pacifick Endeavours to prevent a Rupture by the healing Accommodations they have hitherto offer'd, has presum'd so far on his pretended Sovereignty, as by his *Letters of Separation*, to exclude them from the Charity and Communion of the Faithful, they ought to carry their *Resentment* of this insolent Treatment much higher, and to make such reasonable and just Reflections as these.

“ If the *Pope* has no such *Infallibility*, as he boasts of, If he, as well as other Fallible Men may Err, even in Matters of Faith, If he have no such *Absolute Dominion* over all Christian Pastors and their Flocks, as he pretends to be derived to him from *Christ*, as his *Vicar on Earth*: Then he is the most vile Impostor, and detestable Usurper. Shou'd any Subject of a French King, falsely pretend a Commission from him, to rule the Kingdom, with the same *Absolute Authority*, as the Monarch himself, and under that pretence Issue out his Edicts, and require an absolute Subjection to them, and banish, or disfranchise all those Subjects that will not submit to his usurped Domination, should not every Loyal Subject abhor and resist such a daring and wicked Usurper? And yet the Crime of such an Usurper is but a Peccadillo, compar'd with the more atrocious Crime of the Bishop of Rome, if he falsely pretend to that *Infallibility* he never was indued with, and under that false Pretence, claim that *Absolute Dominion* over the Faith of the Universal Church that our Saviour never vested him with, and presumes to cast all out of it (as far as his rash Sentence can do it) who refuse that entire and unlimited Obedience to his Constitutions and Decrees, which he unjustly demands. Does not such a gross Deceiver and impudent Usurper look much more like *Antichrist*, then the *Vicar of Christ*? Is such a Deceiver and Usurper fit to be to a Member of the Christian Church at all? Does not so monstrous a Crime deserve all the *Anathema's* that can be denounc'd against himself? Does it not appear the absurdest thing in the World, to own such a proud and imperious *Lucifer* for the Head of the Church, and the Centre of Unity to it? Is it not a necessary Instance of Fidelity to our common Lord and only Master, who never gave him so high a Privilege, and vast a Power, as he insolently claims, to reject his false Pretensions and renounce his usurped Dominion?

“ Is not this false Doctrine of his single *Infallibility* and *absolute Authority*, a most destructive Heresy? Does it not tend to pervert the Christian Religion, by setting up *Dictates* of a Fallible Man for necessary Articles of the Christian Faith? Does it not tend to enslave the Universal Church, to the uncontrolled Dominion of one, to whom our Saviour never gave any such Commission to Lord it over his Heritage? Has it not occasion'd the most grievous Schism between that part of the Christian World, that owns, and that which rejects, his usurped Authority? And are not all that own such a notorious Heretick and Schismatick for the Head of the Universal Church, partakers of his Guilt?

“ Shou'd not the Learned Prelates of France at last begin to enquire upon what reasonable Grounds they have so long own'd such a false Pretender for the *Vicar of Christ*, and his Chair for the Centre of Unity, to which all the Faithful must remain inviolably attach'd. (as the *Cardinal de Noailles* does, in his late Mandate for publishing his Appeal.) For while the People are taught by these Prelates, to revere the *Papal Supremacy*, as establish'd by God himself, and never to deviate from the Respect they owe to what they call his *Apostolick Chair*: The *Popes Decree* will, in the Issue, prov'd too hard for their Appeal; † And the blind Terror

† For the Appeal it self to a General Council, I cannot see what the Cardinal and other not-accepting Prelates and Clergy of France propose by it, but to shelter themselves at present from the Storm that the *Pope's Letter of Separation* threatens them with. For they are too well acquainted with the Politicks of the See of Rome, to imagine, That the *Pope* will ever call what they account a General Council. He has not forgot the terrible blow given to the *Papal Supremacy* by the Councils of *Constance* and *Basil*, that roundly asserted this Supreme Authority over the Universal Church to be committed by *Christ* to them as the Representative of it, and asserted the Head, as well as the Members of it, to be subject to their Tribunal. He has not forgot what extreme Difficulty those of his Predecessors, during whose Pontificates the last Council of *Trent* sat, met with, in warding off the Blows that were aim'd at the *Papal Sovereignty*. For tho' all possible Precautions were taken to oppress the Liberty of the Council, by that seasonable Clause *Proponentibus Legatis* at their first Entrance into Business, by getting the Votes to pass not by Nations but by Poll, by pouring in continually fresh Auxiliaries of Italian Prelates to defend the Authority of the Holy See against the Attempts of the Prelates on the other side the Alps, by the Flatteries and Menaces the *Pope's Legates* were forc'd to use, to make those Prelates relish the fresh Inspirations sent them by the *Papal Couriers*, by Bribery, Pensions, and a Thousand other Artifices, that put the Court of Rome to great Cost and Charges, as well as threw them often into great Anxieties and Fears: I say, notwithstanding all these Precautions, they had much ado

of his *Excommunicatory Letters* will have more force upon the Consciences of a deluded People. Nor will the Cardinal de Noailles's nice Distinction between the *Sovereign Pontiff*, and the *Officers of the Court of Rome*, obstruct the Effect of them. Nor will his slender Allegations of the *Sovereign Pontiff's* not being exempted from the Surprizes, that human Weakness, and the Passions of those about him, expose him to, avail much. For the People will rather believe the *Sovereign Pontiff* himself, who declares that he publish'd his *Constitution* after long and mature deliberation, and Prayers for divine Light; and that he has not proceeded to this severity in his *Letters of Separation*, till after a long Exercise of his Patience (even for five Years together) in waiting for their *Submission* to his *Constitution*. They will therefore still dread the Effect of these *Letters of Separation* that threaten them with being cut off from what these *Non-accepting Prelates* themselves acknowledge to be the *Centre of Catholick Unity*. And since these *Prelates* complain (and very justly) of this *Constitution* (to use the Cardinal's *Expressions*) as an outrage done to their Order, a Violation of the most essential Rights of *Episcopacy*, the Destruction of the Fundamental Maxims of their Liberties, as an Attack upon the most establish'd Principles of the Laws of Discipline, that would occasion nothing but Trouble and Confusion in Church and State, by overthrowing the Order of Ecclesiastical Judgments; They will find no effectual Remedy against these terrible *Mischiefs*, without roundly casting off the *Papal Supremacy*. All other *Methods* will be but *Palliative Cures*. Without this their boasted Liberties of the *Gallican Church* will soon expire, and *quos non decet nisi esse Servos*, be engraven on their Tomb, if on such an extraordinary Occasion as this, they use no vigorous Endeavours to rescue themselves and their People from that abject Slavery of Conscience and Bondage of Thought (to use Dr. Gedde's Significant Expression) which the *Papal Sea* would reduce them to. They may talk what they please of a Right to judge in Matters of Faith being annex'd to their *Episcopal Office* by divine Institution. But they plainly see, The Pope owns no such Right to belong to them. He thinks St. Peter's Keys are given to him alone, And that they are no sharers with him in the Use of them. He is resolv'd to number them among the Sheep and Lambs, whom he, the Supreme Pastor is Authoriz'd by Christ both to Feed and Rule. He looks upon them as meer Delegates of the Holy See to be put in or put out at his Pleasure; and allows them no higher Quality than that of being Executors of his Decrees, to which he claims a blind Obedience. And therefore they will do nothing to the Purpose without striking at the Root of all these Evils, under which they so sensibly groan, viz. The *Papal Headship* and *Supremacy* itself. Without this Step, They must still expect the perpetual Incroachments of the *Papal*, upon what they call the *Episcopal Power*, till they find all the Privileges they pretend to, insulted and trampled under Foot. And they can no way so effectually shew a truly Christian and Heroick Zeal in defence of their boasted Liberties, as by renouncing the Communion of so bold an invader of their Essential Rights. And why shou'd they not herein follow the laudable Example of that excellent Prince Ludovicus Pius, the Son and Successor of Charlemagne, who when he understood that Pope Gregory the 4th. came with a Design to excommunicate all those that would not join with his own rebellious Sons against him, sent him that blunt and reasonable Message, *Si Excommunicatus venerit, Excommunicatus abibit. That if he came to excommunicate them, he shou'd go away excommunicated himself?* Why shou'd they not treat the Pope's *Letters of Separation* with that just Contempt as *Gonsior Bishop of Cologne*, and *Tetgaud Archbishop of Triers*, at the Head of a Council of *Prelates*, did Pope Nicholas the 1st's *Excommunicatory Sentence*, (And I am sure the *Non-accepting Prelates of France* have a much better Cause.)

Those two *Prelates* I have just now mention'd, return'd the Pope an Answer in the Name of the Council, that contains a *Vein of Reasoning*, and *Sense of Liberty* that cou'd hardly have been expected in such an ignorant Age. It was in the following Terms, "Thou callest thy self Father, but thou actest like a Jupiter, a God. Thou professest thyself a *Servant of Servants*, but thou would'st be a *Lord of Lords*. According to the Direction of our Saviour, thou shou'd act as the least Minister in the Church" [I suppose they here refer to our Saviour's Words *Mat. xx. 26, 27.*] "But thou suffereest thyself to be hurried away with the Passion of Domineering. Thou believest there is no other Rule of thy Will, but thy Will and Pleasure itself. Wherefore We and our Collegues have no regard for thy little Edicts. We own not thy Voice. We are neither afraid of thy Thunders nor thy Flashes. Thou Condemnest and Excommunicatest those as Wicked, who will not Obey thy Wicked Constitutions. We cut thy own Throat with thy own Sword. Even Thine, who Tramplest on the Laws of the Lord, and sowest Discord among Collegues, and violatest that immortal Peace, which is the Livery of the Prince of Heaven. The Holy Spirit is the Founder of all Churches, in what part of the World soever they be. The City of our God, of which we are Burghesses, is greater than the City which is call'd Babylon by the Prophets, that usurps Divinity, that equals herself to Heaven, that boasts of her being eternal as if she were God, fill'd with immortal Wisdom. She falsely assumes to herself the Glory of having never err'd, and that she can never err."

And shou'd these *Non-accepting Prelates* and *Clergy of France* entirely renounce the Pope's Communion, all the unbyas'd Part of the Christian World would justify their Conduct towards such a Monster of Pride, that thus opposes his falsely pretended Authority to God's express Commands for reading his own Word. And their Sentence against him would be back'd by the Authority of God himself, to whose Written Word the Popes *Constitution* offers such a notorious and vile Indignity. And sure these Learned *Prelates* cannot but smile, themselves, at the Popes comparing their resisting his *Constitution* to the Sin of Witchcraft, and their not acquiescing in it, to the Crime of Idolatry. It would rather look as if the Pope had practis'd the Art of Witchcraft upon themselves, if he who in this matter acts as if he were in compact with the Devil (in this pernicious Design of discouraging and suppressing the Liberty of Reading the Word of God) shou'd so far infatuate them by the vain Terror of unjust Excommunications, as to prevail with them to obey him rather than God. And they would be in much greater Danger of the Crime of Idolatry in Subjecting their Faith and Consciences to his imperious Decrees, and paying their unlimited Obedience to his Dictates,

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to keep the *Papal Sovereignty safe and intouch'd*. 'Tis true indeed, that at last, all these Difficulties were surmounted, and that slavish Council were brought to desire a Confirmation of their Decrees by Pope Pius 4th, who not only readily granted it, but also by a masterly stroke of refined papal Policy (suggested to him by *Hugo Buon-compagno* who was rewarded with a Bishoprick for his notable Advice) serv'd all their Decisions as he does the Bible, made them signify just what he pleas'd himself, by reserving to his pretended Apostolical See the sole Power of interpreting the sense of them, and determining all Disputes that arise about it. But the Pope is not so sure that those Arts will succeed again, as to run the risque of another General Council. He will never leave that Absolute Authority that his *Prelates* had claim'd and exercis'd for so many Ages, and which after the Wound given to it by the Councils of Constance and Basle they had so effectually re-establish'd, to the uncertain Arbitration of another General Council, and much less would he admit these *French Prelates* whom he calls *Rebels*, to sit there as Judges of it. So that their Appeal to a General Council is in effect the putting off the Decision of this grand Cause ad Græcas Calendas. * *Aventinus Annal. Boiorum l. 4 p. 330.*

States, that is due only to the *Diſtates* of the *Supream* and *Infallible* God. This wou'd be indeed no leſs than the *Idolizing* a Mortal Man; and one, whom according to their own avowed Principles they ought to regard as an *Impoſter* and *Uſurper* in the *faſe* Claim he ſo confidently lays to *Infallibility*, and to *absolute* and *uncontrollable* Authority.

“ II. I wou'd farther Obſerve, Tho' the Pope in his *Bull Unigenitus*, has condemn'd thoſe *Propoſitions* in Father *Queſnell's* Book that relate to the *Right* and *Obligation* of all Chriſtians, to read the Holy Scriptures, and branded them with a great many hard Names (of which the Roman Pontiffs are very liberal in their Cenfures of any *Propoſitions* that they think oſopite to the Intereſt of what they call the Holy See) Yet he has not ſo much Condeſcention, and Charity to the Faithful, to whom his *Bull* is addreſs'd, as to imploy that *Talent* of *Infallibility* he pretends to, in ſhewing them, where our Saviour has in his Written Goſpel forbid the Reading of it, or excluded the greateſt Numbers of his Followers from the Liberty and Privilege of Reading it; Or repreſented the promiſcuous Liberty of Reading it, as rather *Dangerous* and *Miſcheivous*, than *Safe* and *Profitable*; Or if the Pope pretends to know the Mind of Chriſt in this Matter, by *Orall Tradition*, He has not Thought fit to acquaint them, how he came by this *Orall Tradition*, by what Hands it has been convey'd to him, And what Security we have for the certain Conveyance of it. For as far as we can ſearch the Records of the Univerſal Church, no ſuch *Orall Tradition* was ever known or heard of for ſeveral Centuries. And yet for the Pope to have given ſome Satisfaction to the Faithful, upon what Grounds he confidently condemns the foremention'd *Propoſitions* of Father *Queſnell's*, as *Faſe*, *Blasphemous*, *Wicked* &c. and even *Heretical*, is the leaſt that might have been expected from him in a Point of ſo vaſt Conſequence to the whole Chriſtian World, as the Liberty and Right of all the Diſciples of Chriſt, to read their Saviours Written Goſpel. For he might well imagin, they would not part with ſo important a Right, and for ſo many Ages unconteſted, without the leaſt Reason given to perſuade them to renounce it.

“ And if the Pope (as he pretends in his *Bull*) pray'd ſo earneſtly for *Divine Light*, to direct him in his Cenfure of thoſe *Propoſitions*, it wou'd have been but charitable to impart ſome of that *Light* to the Faithful, in order to convince them of the *Heretical* *Pravity* of theſe *Propoſitions*. And this was the more neceſſary, becauſe thoſe that are acquainted with the written Goſpel of Chriſt, find a poſitive Command of his there to *Search the Scriptures*, in order to our finding out in them the Way to *Eternal Life*, John v. 39. And while this Command of his lays upon us ſo plain and peremptory an *Obligation* to the Reading them as our unqueſtionable *Duty*, we can never think it a damnable *Hereſy* to aſſert, that *they ſhou'd be read by all*. And the Diſpute between the Pope and the Faithful is brought to a ſhort Iſſue, whether Chriſt's Command, or this *Conſtitution* of his pretended *Vicar*, ſhall be Obey'd.

“ But what the Pope's *Conſtitution* wants in *Light*, it makes up abundantly with *Heat*. And tho' he will not vouchſafe to *inſtruct* the faithful, he endeavours to *terrify* them. If any of them eithe publicly or privately aſſert their own *Right* and *Obligation* to read the Holy Scriptures: They muſt, *ipſo facto*, without any other Declaration, incur the Church-Cenfures, and be obnoxious to other Penalties appointed by Law againſt ſuch Delinquents; i. e. They muſt be excluded from the Communion of the Church of Chriſt, for pleading their own *Right* to read his Goſpel, and be ſent to Goal, till the Hardſhips and Miſery's of a long Imprifonment have taught them to renounce it. And all *Patriarchs*, *Archbishops*, *Bishops* and other *Ordinaries*, and the *Inquiſitors*, muſt, as the Pope's tame and blind *Lictors*, execute this Sentence againſt them: And if all theſe *Eccleſiaſtical Cenfures*, will not bring them to a *Recantation*, muſt call in the *Aſſiſtance* of the *Secular Power*, (i. e. To Burn them for damnable Hæreticks.) This laſt clauſe was ſeaſonably put in; For no *Heretick*, how obſtinate ſoever, can reſiſt the Force of *Fire* and *Faggot*. If it do not convince his Judgment, It will at leaſt *Stop his Mouth*, and put him out of all further Capacity to ſpread his Hereſy. It is an uſual Motto that Princes engrave on their *Cannon*, *Ratio ultima Regum*. And the Pope reſolv'd that his *Bull* ſhould not want this *Inſcription*, *Ratio ultima Papæ*.

“ And thus the faithful Diſciples of Chriſt are reduc'd to this hard *Dilemma*, either to diſobey his Command of Reading and Searching the Scriptures, and thereby venture upon his condemning Sentence for their willful Neglect; or diſobey the Popes *Conſtitution*, and incur the Cenfure of the *Romiſh Church*, with all the Penalties in Law that follow upon them, and run the Hazard of being deliver'd over to the *Secular Arm*, to be Burnt and Deſtroy'd for *Hereticks*. But tho' the *Latter* of theſe be terrible to *Fleſh* and *Blood*; Yet I hope the *Former* will be more terrible to all that revere the Authority of Chriſt more than the Pope's, and dread his *Final Sentence*, more than all the *Thunders* of the *Vatican*; And indeed the *Latter* wou'd do little harm, if the *Secular Powers* wou'd be ſo wiſe as to reſuſe the Lending their *Temporal Sword* to this *Spiritual Tyrant*.

And (if it were allowable in ſo ſerious and ſolemn a Matter as this) one cou'd ſcarce forbear *Smiling* at the Pope's concluding his *Bull* with threatening all that oppoſe it, with the *Indignation* of *Almighty God*, and of his *Bleſſed Apoſtles* Peter and Paul.

“ For the Great God himſelf, When he had deliver'd his Law by *Mofes* to his ancient People, he add'd this Solemn Charge to it *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul, and with all thy Might*; And theſe Words that I command thee this Day ſhall be in thine Heart, And thou ſhalt diligently teach them thy Children, and talk of them when thou ſitteſt in thine Houſe, and when thou walkeſt by the Way, and when thou lieſt down, and when thou riſeſt up, Thou ſhalt bind them for a Sign upon thy Hand, and they ſhall be as Frontlets between thine Eyes, Thou ſhalt Write them upon the Poſts of thy Houſe, and on thy Gates. Deut. vi. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. And 'tis obſervable, that this *Latter Duty* is recommended as the moſt genuine Fruit and moſt Subſtantial Evidence of our Superlative Love to the *Bleſſed God*. We may alſo Obſerve in the *New Teſtament*, that when the Father gave that Solemn Atteſtation to our Saviour as his well-beloved Son, by a Voice from Heaven, he adds that Solemn Command, *Hear ye him*, Math. xvii. 9. And we are ſure, That his Son *Speaks* to us in his *Written Goſpel*. So juſtly does Father *Queſnell* obſerve in one of his condemned *Propoſitions*, That to *Snatch the New Teſtament out of the Hands* of Chriſtians, or keep it ſhut to them, by depriving them of the Means of Underſtanding it, is to ſhut to them the Mouth of Chriſt. And ſo far is the *Bleſſed God* from being diſpleas'd with our uſing this Liberty of Reading his own Written Word, that he has pronounc'd that Man *Bleſſed*, who delights in his Law, and Meditates therein Day and Night. Pſal. i. 1, 2. And it will puzzle the Pope's *Infallibility* to reſolve us, How we can do this without Reading it, or ever bearing it Read in a Language we Underſtand.

“ And now can any Thing appear more *abſurd* and *ridiculous* then for the Pope to threaten all thoſe with the *Indignation* of *Almighty God*, who aſſert, That they may and ought to Read his *Written Word*? Or has not he infinitely greater Reason to dread his *Indignation*, who ſo audaciouſly condemns their *Right* to read it?

and Obligation to read it? And thereby as Father *Quesnell* justly observes, forbids the Use of Light to the Children of Light? Is it not ridiculous for him to threaten those with the Indignation of the blessed Apostles Peter and Paul, who plead for the Liberty of all Christians to read their own Inspired Writings? Has not he much greater Reason to apprehend, that his condemning their Liberty of Reading them, will move the Indignation of those blessed Apostles! and (what is more terrible) the Indignation of their great Lord and Master, who has by his Spirit incited and directed them to pen those Writings, for the perpetual Instruction of his Church, and of all the particular Members of it? He will soon find to his Cost, That God's Indignation is not at the Command of every imperious Pope; and instead of being pour'd out on the sincere Lovers and Readers of his own written Word, will be certainly pour'd out upon such as wou'd wickedly wrest it out of his People's Hand, in order to establish their usurped Dominion over their Faith.

III. I wou'd Observe, That if these Propositions of Father *Quesnell* relating to the Right and Obligation of all Christians to read the Holy Scripture, do in the Pop's Judgment, deserve all the vile Characters that he bestows upon them in his Bull, then the contrary Propositions must pass for Orthodox and sound Doctrine. Thus for Instance, 'Tis Orthodox Doctrine in the Pope's Judgment to assert, That 'tis not Profitable or Necessary in all Times or all Places, and for all Sorts of Persons to study the Spirit, Piety, and Mystery of the Holy Scriptures.

That the Reading of the Holy Scriptures is not for all.
That the Lord's Day must not be sanctify'd by Christians with the Reading of pious Books, and especially the Holy Scriptures, and that 'tis not Mischievous but wholesome to withdraw them from the Reading thereof. And so of the rest.

Now these Propositions that are but the Reverse of Father *Quesnell's* condemned Ones, are so far from containing Sound and Orthodox Doctrine, that they most truly deserve the hard Words that the Pope uses in condemning the contrary Propositions in Father *Quesnell's* Book.

They are False, as being opposite to the positive Commands of God in his Written Word already mention'd.

They Sound ill in, and are Offensive to all pious Ears, as notoriously tending to lessen the Veneration that all Pious Souls have for the Written Word of God as the incorruptable Seed of divine Life, and given to be the certain Compleat Rule of their Faith and Practice.

They are Scandalous, as carrying with them injurious Reflections upon the Holy Scriptures, as if they were a Dangerous Book, not fit to be read by the far greatest Part of the Christian Church, lest they should get more harm, than good by it.

They appear Scandalous, not only to all the Protestant Churches, But even to many in the Romish Communion it self, as appears by that just Complaint made by the Cardinal de Noailles against the Pope's Constitution in his Appeal, in these remarkable Word's. But the Paternal Heart of a Bishop cannot be witness to the Grief, which the Censures of Propositions, which concern the Reading the Holy Scriptures, and the Celebration of the Divine Office, causes to the Children of the Church; of the Revolt which that Condemnation inspires in the New Converts, of the almost invincible Obstacle it puts to the Conversion of Hereticks, without being Sensibly touch'd with it. The Unlearned among the Faithful have believ'd, That in Censuring these Propositions, The Pop's Intention was to forbid them the Reading the Holy Books, which were Written for the Instruction and Consolation of Christians. [And by the way they had very good Reason to believe so.] And that he would at the same Time take from them the Consolation of Uniting their Voices with that of the Church, in Singing the Praises of God. And his Holiness is not ignorant of the Scandal which has been particularly occasion'd by the Censure of the 82d. Proposition, That the Lord's Day ought to be Sanctify'd, by the Reading of Pious Books, and especially of the Holy Scriptures. And can the Cardinal with any Reason blame the Protestants whom he unjustly calls Hereticks, for not embracing the new Faith of the Romish Church when they cannot find one of the Articles of it in those Holy Books; nay when he who sets up for the Head of that Church, so impiously condemns the Liberty of Reading them, and thereby gives them just ground to suspect, That the Pope himself apprehends, That the Romish Faith does not agree with the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, in those Holy Books. It were much to be wish'd, that those Learned Prelates wou'd on this Occasion more impartially and thoroughly compare the one with the other.

They are Pernicious, as tending to Rob the Children of God of their Spiritual Food, the Bread of Life, and to reduce them to general deplorable Ignorance, or to feed upon the Husks and Chaff of human Traditions.

They are Rash, as they set up the Pope's Constitution against the positive Command of Christ.

They are Injurious to the Church and her Practice. They are so to the Universal Church, and the known Practice of it for several of its first and purest Ages! When for all Christians to read the Holy Scripture, was acknowledg'd as their undoubted Right, and by the best Writers of those Ages, frequently inculcated upon them as their Duty. The Reading them was never forbidden till Ignorance, Idolatry, and innumerable superstitions, built on Human Traditions, and establish'd by Ecclesiastical Tyranny, had so generally prevail'd in the Romish Church. And 'tis this impious Prohibition which is at present the chief Support of them, and the fatal Obstruction to all necessary Reformation. The Liberty of Reading them is indeed opposite to the present Practice of the Romish Church. But their Practice is a notorious Deviation from the Practice of the primitive Church; and their incurable Aversion to alter it, is a plain Argument that they are sensible the Holy Scriptures do but ill agree with their new Romish Faith, when they dare not trust their Proselytes with the free Use of them.

They are Seditious, as tending to create Trouble and Confusion both in Church and State, as the Cardinal de Noailles complains.

They are Wicked, as tending to keep the main Body of Christian People in that Ignorance, that is the chief Parent and source of all manner of Wickedness, and to deprive them of that Light of the Word of God, that shou'd discover and reprove their Evil Deeds.

They are Blasphemous, as they cast the most vile and injurious Reflections on the Wisdom of God, in delivering those Inspired Writings for the Instruction and Direction of his Universal Church, the Reading whereof wou'd in the Opinion of the Pope, and too many other Guides of the Romish Church, prove to the greatest Part of the Members of it rather mischievous and hurtfull, than profitable and salutary; and rather tend to make them Hereticks than Orthodox Christians.

They are suspected of Heresy, favouring of Heresy, and favouring Hereticks, Heresies, and Schism too; Erroneous, Bordering upon Heresy, as appears by our Saviour's assigning the Ignorance of the Scriptures as the chief spring of pernicious Errors; Matth. xxii. 29. And they tend to extinguish that Light of the word of God, that is the only sure and unerring Test to distinguish between Truth and Error, between the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints, and damnable Heresies; A Test which the present Romish Faith will never be able to stand.

“ They are in fine, *Heretical*. For if any *Affertions* can truly deserve that Title, we must account these to be such, that are not only so *blasphemous*, so *injurious* to the Honour of God, and of his sacred *Written Word*, so *opposite* to his *positive Commands*, but especially so manifestly tending to the *Destruction* of *Millions of Souls*, by depriving them of the *salutary Light* of the *written Gospel*, and exposing them to *perish* for lack of *Divine Knowledge*.

“ I must now leave every Christian Reader to judge for himself, whether the *Censure* pass'd by the Pope on these forecited *Propositions* in Father *Queshnell's* Book, or the *Censure* here pass'd on the *Propositions* necessarily imply'd in the Pope's *Condemnation* of them, be *just* and *well-grounded*. The *Sovereign Pontiff* (according to Custom) wou'd have his *Censure* taken for *just*, upon his bare *Word*, leaving us no *Liberty* to *dispute*, but only to *Believe* and *Obeys*. I thought it needful to annex a few *short*, but (I hope) *Solid* Reasons to retort the *Censure* upon himself.

“ Upon the whole I look upon all Christians who reverence the *Written Gospel* of Christ, as highly interested in this *Contest* about the Pope's foremention'd *Constitution*. If the Pope prevail in his *Design* to deter those whom he calls the *Faithful* in *France* from *Reading* it, I expect the *Gallican Church* will after all her *Pretensions* to greater *Liberty*, be in a little Time reduc'd to as great a *Degree* of *Ignorance* and *Spiritual Slavery* as *Italy*, *Spain*, and *Portugal*. Whereas if the *Reading* of the *Holy Scriptures* be encourag'd and generally practis'd, I hope it will in due time cast the *Romish Faith*, and that grand support of it the *Papal Tyranny* out of the *Christian Church*. For wherever the *Light* of the *Written Gospel* spreads, It will dispel the *Darkness* and *Delusions* of *Popery*.

“ I shall no longer detain the Reader from the following *Sermon*, than by briefly Suggesting to him, That I am far from supposing every *Erroneous Opinion* that a Man may entertain and defend, that does not subvert the *Essentials* of the *Christian Faith*, and which he may be led into by mistaking the sense of the *Holy Scriptures*, will subject him to this *Anathema* denounc'd in the *Text* against such as *Preach* another *Gospel* besides that which we have receiv'd. Some may build *Hay* and *Stubble* on the *Foundation* as well as *Silver* and *Gold*, and *precious Stones*. And tho' the *Fire* of the last *Judgment* will try and burn up such corrupt *Materialls*, Yet those that use them may (thro' a compassionate Allowance for their pardonable Mistakes) be *Saved*, yet as by *Fire*, They may Escape *tanquam ex incendio*. I only suppose this *Apostolical Anathema* level'd against such as proudly *Lord* it over *God's Heritage*, by imposing *Doctrines* and *Practices* that are *no where Reveal'd* and *Enjoyn'd* in the *Written Gospel* of Christ, and are in many *Instances* contrary thereto, on the *Consciences* of all Christians, as *absolutely necessary* to *Salvation*. This is what I ascribe as a *Perversion* of the *Gospel* of Christ, and in effect *Preaching* another *Gospel* than that which we have *Receiv'd*. And this is the *Guilt* wherewith I charge the *Guides* of the *Romish Church*. And besides all the other *Aggravations* of it, I may add this mischeivous and malignant Effect of it, That it is manifestly *destructive* of *Catholick Charity*, by leading these imperious *Imposers* and their deluded *Followers* to regard all that Part of the *Christian World* (and indeed the far greater Part of it) as excluded from all possibility of *Salvation*, who reject these unwarantable and corrupt *Additions* to the *Written Gospel* of Christ. This new *Romish Gospel* has not only corrupted our *common Faith*, but also lay'd the *Foundation* of the most greivous *Schism*, and most opposite to that *Extensive Love*, that is the distinguishing *Character* and *Badge* of our *Christian Profession*.

P O S T S C R I P T.

HAVING in the *Sermon* at p. 12. mention'd the Opinion of those *Doctors* of the *Romish Church*, that make a *Pope* and *Council* conjunct, *infallible Judges* in all Points of Religion, and shewn the *falsehood* of it, from the *Contradictory Decisions* of *Popes* and *Councils*, in reference to that *Capital Controversy* among themselves, concerning the *Superiority* of a *General Council* above the *Pope*, or of the *Pope* above a *General Council*, I shall add one demonstrative Argument, That this *Doctrine* of the *Infallibility* of a *Pope* and *Council* conjunct is not own'd and believ'd in *France*. The *Doctrine* of the *Pope's Power* of *Deposing Princes* and particularly those that do not endeavour to *Exterminate Hereticks* out of their *Dominions* and *absolving Subjects* from their *Oaths of Allegiance* to them, has been defin'd by the 3d. and 4th. *Lateran Councils*, with the *Pope* at the Head of them. *Lat. 3d. c. 28. Lat. 4th. c. 3.* How far this *Doctrine* has been countenanc'd by the *Council* of *Lyons* (that concurr'd with the *Pope* in the *Deposition* of the *Emperor Frederick*) by that of *Constance*, of *Sienne*, of *Basil*, and *Trent* it self See *Dr. Burnet's Examin. of the Letters of the General Assembly of the Clergy of France*, &c. p. 174, 175, &c. This is a *Doctrine* of the most important Consequence to the *Authority* of *Princes*, and *Duty* of *Subjects*. And it also draws along with it a *Train* of the most pernicious Effects imaginable. But 'tis a *Doctrine* which the *French Clergy* in the late *Reign* of *Lewis XIV.* have prudently thought fit to renounce, as highly *injurious* to the *Authority* of *Princes*, and inconsistent with that *Subjection* to the *Higher Powers*, which the *Scriptures* so expressly *injoyn*. *Rom. xiii. 1, 2, &c.* And if this *Doctrine* be rejected by them as *False* and *Pernicious*, They must at the same time not only disclaim the pretended *Infallibility* of those they call *General Councils*, but even their *Decisions*, when they have the concurrence of the pretended *Vicar* of Christ with them. And they can never think such a *General Council* to be under the *Unerring Conduct* of the *Holly Spirit*, that by such a *peremptory Decree*, not only subjects the *Crowns* of *Princes* to the *Papal Power*, but binds *Princes* themselves to a *Practice* so wicked in itself, as the *exterminating* all whom the *Church of Rome* accounts *Hereticks* out of their *Dominions*. A *Practice* so manifestly contrary to the mild and merciful *Spirit* of the *Christian Religion*, so evidently tending to fill the *Christian World* with *Confusion* and *Blood*, that those who by their *Decree* *Authoriz'd* it, deserve to be taken for *declared Enemies* of *Kings* and *Kingdoms*, and cou'd be led thereto by no other *Spirit* than his, who delights in *Sacrifices* of *Human Blood*. And thou'd all *Protestant Princes*, who take *Popery* to be a *swarm* of *Heresies*, imitate their *Practice*, by *Exterminating* all *Papists* out of their *Dominions*, *Europe* wou'd be turn'd into an *Aeldama*; and *Papists* themselves be sensible of the pernicious Consequences of so *Bloody* a *Doctrine* as this. I shall only add, That it has been often observ'd, That this *Doctrine*, That *Hereticks* ought to be *Exterminated*, and those *Princes* *Depos'd* by the *Pope*, that *refuse* to *Exterminate* them, pass'd in the same *Council* that establish'd the *Doctrine* of *Transubstantiation*. And shall we think such a *Council* *Infallible*, that wou'd not only thus *Lord* it over the *Consciences* of the *Christian World*, by obliging them to renounce their *Senses*, but wou'd usurp such an *Empire* over the *Crowns* of *Princes* and the *Lives* of their *Subjects*.

S E R M O N XXXIV.

Preach'd on the 23d of October, 1718.

G A L. I. Verse viii, ix.

Ver. viii. *But tho' we or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel to you, than that which we have preached unto you, let him be Accursed.*

Ver. ix. *As we said before, so say I now again, If any Man preach any other Gospel to you than that which ye have received, let him be Accursed.* Avalde-

THESE Words may not appear at the first view suitable to the particular Occasion of Commemorating our remarkable Deliverances from the Destructive Attempts of our Popish Enemies. But since I have in several former Discourses so largely insisted on our signal Deliverances of that kind, both those wrought by the gracious Providence of God in the Days of our Fathers, and in our own; I judged it not improper at this time, to give you a general and just Idea of Popery itself, as 'tis manifestly distinguishable from our common Christianity. And the due Consideration thereof will naturally serve to enhance our Gratitude for those wonderful interpositions of Divine Power and Mercy, that have prevented our relapsing into it. For if Popery, (or the *Roman Religion*, considered abstractedly from what is common to them and the reformed Churches) be another Gospel, both entirely Different from that which Christ and his Apostles have deliver'd; and in many remarkable Instances most contrary to it; And if there be such an *Anathema* denounc'd by the Apostle in my Text against the Authors and Abettors of any other Gospel than that which we have receiv'd; We must own it as an invaluable Mercy, that the Light of the unadulterated Gospel of Christ is still preserv'd among us, after so many dangerous Attempts for the Extinction of it, and for bringing us again under the Tyrannical usurpation of those who would impose another Gospel on the Christian World.

And how applicable this Passage of the Apostle Paul which I have now read is to this purpose, will appear, if we consider the particular Occasion of it.

The Apostle sets himself, in this Epistle, to oppose those Judaizing Teachers, who endeavour'd to bring the Churches of Galatia into subjection to the Yoke of the Ceremonial Law, and urg'd the Observance of it as necessary to their Justification and Salvation. (see xv. Acts 1.) And as these Seducers had been already too successful in spreading this pernicious Error among many in these Churches, so the Apostle upbraids them with their Folly in being so easily perverted by them. *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that hath call'd you into the Grace of Christ into another Gospel. Which is not another, but there are some that would trouble you, and pervert the Gospel of Christ.* 6, 7. 'Tis observable that he here calls the Doctrine of these Judaizing Teachers; concerning the

Necessity of their observing the Ceremonial Law of Moses, another Gospel. Because it impos'd on the Consciences of Men, other Terms of being admitted into the Favour of God and obtaining Salvation, than what the Gospel of Christ requir'd. For in the Christian Institution, *Neither Circumcision, nor Uncircumcision is available* (to these great Ends of our acceptance with God, and our obtaining Salvation) but *Faith which worketh by Love*, Gal. v. 6 And yet he adds, that in some sence it was not another Gospel, because these Judaizing Teachers did own the Necessity of Faith in our Lord Jesus as the true Messiah. But it was a real Perversion of the Gospel of Christ by making that observance of the Mosaic Law necessary to their Justification and Salvation, which Christ himself had never made so, and by Subjecting Christians to that Ceremonial Law that he came to free his Disciples from the Bondage of.

In Opposition to this False as well as Uncharitable Doctrine of these Judaizing Teachers, the Apostle passes this remarkable Censure in my Text upon them, *If we or an Angel from Heaven, preach any other Gospel, besides that which we have preached [unto] you, let him be Anathema.* 'Tis justly observ'd, he does not say, *If we or an Angel preach any other Gospel contrary to that which we have preach'd, Let him be Anathema.* Tho' that is most true: But he reckon'd it a sufficient Crime to subject them to this *Anathema* or *Curse*, if they preach'd another Gospel, than (or besides) that which the Apostles of Christ had already preached, pursuant to his Commission. And he here intimates to them, that such a daring Presumption in preaching another Gospel; by imposing other Terms of Acceptance with God and Eternal Salvation, than our Lord himself ever enjoyn'd, will expose the Authors of it to his Righteous Displeasure and Curse; And such should be had in Abhorrence and Execration by all that own and adhere to our Blessed Saviour as the only Master of our Religion, the only Head of his Universal Church, the only Lord and Lawgiver in it.

And that this awful Censure might make the deeper Impression on the Conscience of those Judaizing Teachers; the Apostle does with great Solemnity repeat it. *As we said before, so say I now again, If any Man preach another Gospel than (or, besides) that ye have receiv'd, Let him be Anathema.*

'Tis worthy of our Observation, That this dreadful Censure, *Let him be Anathema*, or *Accursed*, does only twice occur in the Writings of this Apostle. 'Tis here denounced in the Text against *any one that preaches another Gospel*, even tho' he were dignify'd with the Character of an *Apostle*, or were of that higher Order of *Angels* themselves. The *Other* is (at 1 Cor. xvi. 22.) denounced against every *Man that loves not our Lord Jesus*. The *Former* is levelled against such as pervert and deprave the Gospel of Christ by endeavouring to impose other terms of Salvation than he has commissioned his Apostles to publish in his Name to the World. The *Other*, against those, that instead of expressing their Love to Christ by a sincere Obedience to his Commands, do rather manifest their Enmity to him by *wicked Works*; even those *Works of the Devil*, which he came to destroy.

'Tis the *former* of these awful Censures I am now to consider.

If any *Man preach any other Gospel, than*, (or beside) *that which we have receiv'd*, as deliver'd to us by the inspir'd Apostles of Christ, pursuant to their Commission from him, *Let him be Anathema*.

In treating on this Subject, I propose to enquire,

First, How far the Popes and other Guides of the Romish Church are chargeable with the Guilt here mention'd, of *preaching another Gospel than that which we have receiv'd* from the inspir'd Apostles of Christ?

Secondly, How far this Censure of the Apostle in my Text is applicable to them?

First, I shall enquire, How far the Popes and other Guides of the Romish Church are chargeable with the Guilt mention'd in the Text, of *preaching another Gospel than* (or, besides) *that which we have receiv'd* from the inspir'd Apostles of Christ.

And that they are very justly, and in an high Degree chargeable with this Guilt, will, I judge, evidently appear if we consider the following Particulars.

I. They have set up a new Rule of Christian Faith and Practice, different from that contain'd in the Written Gospel of Christ.

II. They have set up a new Interpreter and Judge of the Written Gospel of Christ, that was never constituted by him, to whose Judgment as infallible, they require an absolute Submission.

III. They have under the Pretence of having such an infallible Judge in matters of Faith, establish'd many *Doctrines* and *Practices* as absolutely Necessary to the Salvation of all Christians, which neither Christ nor his Apostles have *reveal'd* or *enjoin'd*, and many of which are *inconsistent* with what is *Taught* and *Commanded* in the Written Gospel we have receiv'd.

IV. They have in order to the more successful *Imposing* their *Doctrines* and *Practices* which make up their new Gospel, done their utmost to deprive those they call the Laity, of the Knowledge of the Gospel of Christ as deliver'd to us in the Holy Scriptures.

And in order to the giving you fuller Proof of the *Particulars* contain'd in this just tho' heavy Charge, I shall not have recourse to the Writings of this or that particular Romish Doctor; but to the more Authentick Declarations of those they call their *General Councils*, and especially that of *Trent*, whose *Doctrines* are now receiv'd in the Romish Church as the fullest Standard of their Faith.

I begin with the

I. Branch of the Charge, viz. That the Popes and other Guides of the Romish Church have set up a

New Rule of Faith and Practice different from that contain'd in the written Gospel of Christ.

To this purpose the Council of *Trent* in their 4th Session, declares, "That the Truth of Christian Doctrine and Instruction of Manners is contain'd in the Holy Scriptures and in unwritten Traditions, which being receiv'd by the Apostles from the Mouth of Christ, or being deliver'd by the Apostles pursuant to the Dictates of the Holy Spirit, have been handed down to us. And they profess to receive and honour with equal pious Affection and Reverence the Books of the Old and New Testament; and also those Traditions relating both to Faith and Manners; which being declared by word of Mouth by Christ or his Apostles, have been preserved by a continual Succession in the Catholick Church."

Now either those *Articles of Faith and Rules of Practice*, which they pretended to be handed down to them by *Oral Tradition*, are actually deliver'd and taught in the *Holy Scriptures*, or they are not.

If they are already taught and deliver'd in the *Holy Scriptures*, Then are the Holy Scriptures a complete Standard of our Religion, and need not the Supplement of these pretended *Unwritten Traditions* to make up their Deficiency in furnishing us with an entire and adequate Rule of Faith and Manners. And we are as sure that the Mind and Will of Christ is more safely and certainly transmitt'd to us in these inspir'd Writings, than they can be by *Oral Tradition*: As we are sure, That the Laws made by our Kings and Parliaments are more safely convey'd in our Printed *Statute-Books*, than if we were to depend on the *Memories* of *Lawyers* or other Subjects for the Knowledge of them. And if the Holy Scriptures contain an adequate Rule of our Faith and Practice; then the Foundation of this presumptuous Decision of the *Trent Council* is overturn'd, that makes the Holy Scriptures *One part* of our Rule, and *Unwritten Traditions* the *Other*, and requires our paying an equal Affectionate Reverence to the *Latter* as to the *Former*.

But if there are *Necessary Articles of Faith and Rules of Practice* handed down to the Church by *Unwritten Traditions*, that are not deliver'd and taught in the Holy Scriptures: Then are the Holy Scriptures an *Insufficient and Defective Rule*, not capable of themselves to make us wise to Salvation, nor so profitable for *Doctrine*, for *Reproof* (or *Conviction*) for *Correction*, and for *Instruction in Righteousness*, as to render us perfect and thoroughly furnish'd for every good Work. Which is contradictory to what this Apostle elsewhere expressly declares concerning them, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Nay then it will follow, (and sure it carries a strange found with it in the Ears of every true Christian) That tho' a Man impartially, and in the use of all proper Helps, diligently search the Holy Scriptures, and unfeignedly believes whatever he finds to be revealed there, and yields a sincere Obedience to whatever he discerns to be commanded there, It will not be sufficient to secure his Eternal Salvation, unless he believe all those other *Articles of Faith and Rules of Practice* which the Guides of the Romish Church pretend to be handed down to them by *Oral Tradition*. And what is this but setting up *another Gospel* than that which is deliver'd to us in those inspir'd Writings, in which the sacred Penmen assures us, *They have not shun'd to declare the whole Counsel of God to us*, Acts xx. 27. In which they tell us, *They have set forth a Declaration in order of those things that are most surely believ'd among us, as they were deliver'd to us by them, who from the beginning were Eye-witnesses, and Ministers of the Word*, Luke i. 1, 2? And even the Holy Scriptures themselves have given us a Solemn Caution against making any Addition to them under this Pretence of *Oral Tradition*. Not only were the *Israelites* of old strictly forbidden to add to as well as diminish from the *Written Law of Moses*, Deut. xii. 32. But the entire Canon of the Holy Scriptures is clos'd

with a Passage very parallel to that in the Text, *If any Man shall add unto these Things, God shall add to him the Plagues that are written in this Book*, Rev. xxii. 18. And it is very observable, That the Jewish Church in our Saviour's time, set up their *Unwritten Traditions* as a Supplement to the *Written Law*, as the Guides of the Church of Rome do theirs. as a Supplement to the *Written Gospel*. These *Traditions* the Jewish Doctors call'd the *Oral Law*, and pretended that they were deliver'd by *Moses* by Word of Mouth, and transmitted by the *Succession* of their *Priests* and *Elders* from Age to Age. And sure if such *Unwritten Traditions* be necessary to supply the Defects of the *Written Word of God* in delivering the Rule of our Faith and Practice, since the compleating the Sacred Canon: They were much more necessary under that more obscure and imperfect Revelation of the Old Testament. But does our Blessed Saviour own the Authority of these *Unwritten Traditions*, which the Guides of the Jewish Church pretended to? No, He charges the Abettors of them with the guilt of *Teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men*. Mark vii. 7, 8. He justifies his Disciples in their Non-observance of them, he directs his Hearers to the *Law* and the *Prophecies*. He requires them to *Search the Holy Scriptures*, as a sufficient Rule to guide them to the attainment of *Eternal Life*, John v. 39. And if the Jewish Church, (which was then the only Visible one) so grossly Err'd in falsely setting up *Unwritten Traditions* for part of the *Divine Law*; how much more may we suppose the same concerning these pretended *Traditions*, which the Guides of the Romish Church have superadded to the *Written Word of God*, when that is so far from being the *Universal Church*, that 'tis at the utmost but a part of it, and indeed the most corrupt and degenerate part of it.

But after all, what signifies this vain Boast of their *Unwritten Traditions* as a supplemental part of the *Divine Law*, when they have never yet to this Day given us a perfect List of them, never inform'd us how they came by them, and in what Channel they were convey'd to them, never told us whom Christ or his Apostles made the Depositories of this hidden Treasure, never have given us any Rule or Criterion to distinguish *Genuine* from *Spurious* Traditions. And if we may judge what these pretended *Unwritten Traditions* are by the new Articles their *Trent-Council* has superadded to the *Ancient Creeds*, 'tis evident that most of them are such as the far greater part of the *Universal Church* reject and disown as never handed down by any *Oral Tradition* to them. Nay, the most of them are such as were utterly unknown to the *Universal Church*, for several of its purest Ages. And they are such as we can no more reconcile with the *Written Word of God*, than we can reconcile *Light* with *Darkness*, or the pure Worship of God with palpable Idolatry, or the simplicity of *Divine Institutions* with a Load of vain and ludicrous Rites, and an Excess of superstitious Pomp and Pageantry (as will more fully appear in the Sequel of this Discourse) And is it not unaccountable, that if Christ and his Apostles deliver'd such *Unwritten Traditions* as these by Word of Mouth, to be transmitted to all succeeding Ages, as a part of the Rule of Christian Faith and Practice, the *Universal Church* should for several Ages know nothing of them, and the greater part of the *Universal Church* to this day continue ignorant of them? And if these pretended *Unwritten Traditions* be only their own Inventions, here is another Gospel, a New Rule of Faith and Practice advanc'd, which has no stamp of Christ's Authority.

II. The Guides of the Romish Church have set up a new Interpreter and Judge of the *Written Gospel* of Christ, that was never constituted by him, to whose Judgment as infallible, they require all Christians to pay an absolute Submission.

To this purpose, the foremention'd Council of *Trent* takes away from all private Christians a Judgment

of Discretion, "Forbidding them to interpret the Holy Scriptures against that Sense which Holy Mother Church has put, or does put upon them, to whom alone (they tell us) it belongs to Judge of the true Sense and Interpretation of them."

If we enquire, who this *Holy Mother Church* is, whose Interpretation of the Holy Scriptures we are bound to receive with an implicit Faith, we are left by the Council in the Dark, and find it to be a meer Phantome in the Air. For they who refer us to this Unerring Judge, to learn the Mind and Will of God for our Salvation, in his written Word, are unhappily not agreed among themselves, *Who it is*. They boast indeed of an Infallible Authority among them, to decide all Controversies relating to the Christian Faith; but 'tis yet a capital Controversy among them, in whom this infallible Authority is lodged. And are all Christians bound to submit their Judgment to they know not who?

Those Romish Doctors seem indeed to give us the most obvious Sense of *Holy Mother Church*, who understand thereby the diffusive Body of Christians in all successive Ages. And if this were intended by the *Trent Council*, then their Meaning must be, "That we must take that only to be the true Sense of the Holy Scriptures, which all the Members of the Universal Church in every Age have put upon them, and which those of the present Age put upon them. For to them it belongs to judge of their true Sense and Interpretation."

But tho' this be the most natural Construction of the Words of the *Trent-Council*, it contains a Maxim, which tho' espous'd of late by some few of the Romish Writers, is far from being relish'd by the Majority of the Guides of the Church of Rome. For it allows the Laity some share of this *Infallible Authority*, which the Clergy, and especially the more dignify'd part of them wou'd ingross to themselves. And indeed 'tis a Maxim attended with insuperable Difficulties, and so impossible for a private Christian to be guided by, that 'tis as Useless as 'tis absurd. For how shall such a private Christian know, what sense the *Universal Church* has put on the holy Scriptures, in all the foregoing Ages of it? Has the *Universal Church* in every Age, or indeed in any Age ever given us an *Infallible Commentary* on the Bible, in order to determine and fix the true Interpretation of it? Have they ever met, or is it possible they should ever meet to give any such concordant Exposition of them? Or if the Majority must always pass for the *Universal Church*, did the Majority when *Arrianism* so generally prevail'd, and had such numerous Councils to abet it, put the same Sense on the Holy Scriptures, in that important Article relating to the Deity of the Son of God, that had been given before, when the *Nicene Creed* was publish'd, and so generally receiv'd? Did the *Universal Church* in all Ages put the same Sense on the Second Commandment of the Decalogue?

Did they always agree in that Practice of *Image-Worship* that now so generally obtains in the Church of Rome? Did the *Eastern Churches* do so, when it was condemn'd there by one of those call'd *General Councils*, as opposite to the second Commandment, and yet establish'd soon after by another as consistent with it? Did the *Western Churches* agree in it, when so great a Part of them joyn'd with that *Eastern Council* that condemn'd it? Nay did the *Universal Church* in the 3 first Ages patronize this *Image-Worship*, when it was then wholly unknown and unheard of in the Christian World? Nay do's the greater Part of the Christian Church now agree with what we call the Church of Rome, in putting the same Sense on the Holy Scriptures that they do, and particularly in reference to the *Papal Supremacy*? But they have an admirable Salvo for this. We must first take it for granted, that the Church of Rome is the *Catholic* or *Universal Church*, and all the rest damnable *Hereticks*, i. e. we

(i, e, we must, take a *Part*, and the *most corrupt part*, for the *whole*) And we must take it for granted against the clearest Evidence to the contrary, that whatever Sence the Church of *Rome* in this Age puts upon any controverted Text of the Holy Scriptures, is the same with that of the *Universal Church*, in all foregoing Ages, and then they think the difficulty is solv'd. But alas, even upon these unreasonable Concessions the difficulty remains still; how shall we know, in what Sence all those they so absurdly call *Roman-Catholicks* themselves, understand the Scriptures? And here we are sent either to *Popes*, or what they call *General Councils*, or both; and their Expositions must pass for the *true Sence of Mother Church*, and so consequently of the *Holy Scriptures*. And so *Holy Mother Church*, as that signify's the diffusive Body of Christians, is left in the Church, and strip'd off her pretended infallible Authority.

That part of the Romish Church that are more entirely devoted to the papal Interest, choose rather by *Holy Mother Church* to understand their *Holy Father the Pope*. For *Rome* being according to them the *Mother and Mistress of all other Churches*, and the *Pope* the *Head*, and *center of Unity* to them, they think it safest to place this Authority in what they call *St. Peters Chair*, and in the Breast of *St. Peters Successor* there. And so the meaning of this Decision of the *Trent Council* must be; That we must always take that for the true Sence of Holy Scriptures, which *Holy Mother Church*, that is, which the *Bishop of Rome*, the *Head* of it, puts upon them. And so we must have recourse to his Chair, as the *Infallible Tribunal* for deciding all matters of Faith, and must Judge that to be the Sence of God's written Word, which he dictates as such. But do all the Members, and all the Doctors of the Popish Church believe this to be true? No, the most knowing and learn'd part of them, utterly reject this vain Pretension of the *Popes Infallibility*. They know, that some *Popes* have been condemn'd and depos'd by those they call *General Councils*, not only for other atrocious Crimes, but for (what they account the most detestable) *Heresy* itself. They can produce Instances of *Popes* themselves, who (notwithstanding the Arrogancy and Pride that their pretended Authority inspires them with) have had so much Modesty left as to confess themselves *liable to err*, and own that some of their *Predecessors* had *err'd* even in matters of Faith. And therefore they think it much safer to place this Infallible Authority in what they call *General Councils*, which they pretend to be the true *Representative* of the *Universal Church*. But do all those of the Romish Communion agree in this Doctrine of theirs? No, it sounds so ill at *Rome* itself, that if the *Popes* durst venture on so bold a step, they seem inclinable enough to declare it downright *Heretical*. They stiffly pretend that the *Decisions* of those they call *General Councils* are of no validity at all, without their *confirmation*, and no otherwise oblige the Consciences of Christians then as their *Approbation* and *Consent* gives them their Authentick Force. And indeed a regard to their own Interest obliges them to discountenance the contrary Doctrine. For if the Decision of a *General Council* be *Infallible*, on the account of their being the *Representative* of the *Universal Church*, then they are so antecedently to the *Pope's* Confirmation, and would oblige the Consciences of all Christians, whether the *Bishop of Rome* approv'd and ratify'd them, or not. And therefore all the strenuous Defenders of the papal Supremacy, vehemently oppose this Doctrine, as highly injurious to it, and tending to rob *St. Peter's* Successors of the brightest Jewel in the Tripple Crown. And indeed if Christ have appointed such an *Infallible Judge* for the perpetual Direction of his Church, the *Popes* Pretensions seem the more plausible, because there is always such a *living Judge*, whose *Tribunal* at *Rome* may be applied to; Whereas the Church had no *General*

Council for many Ages, and for any thing we know, may never have one to the end of the World. And I might here also observe, that unless they confine the *Universal Church* to a narrow *Self*, this Thing they call a *General Council*, and suppose to be the *Representative* of it, is as meer an acry Fantome, as *Holy Mother Church*. There never was, there never can be any such *General Council*, as is capable of representing the *Universal Church*. And they do but amuse the World with a gross Falshood in the confident noyse they make about it.

Others therefore to salve this Sore, place this Infallible Authority in a *Pope* and *Council* conjunct. And when both agree in expounding the Doctrine contain'd in the Scriptures the same way, we must take that for the Sence of *Holy Mother Church*.

But this Doctrine is also liable to unfurmoutable Difficulties, for if the *Pope* consider'd apart, be fallible; And if a *General Council* consider'd apart, be fallible, it passes all Imagination, how their *Conjunction* and *Agreement* shou'd make them *Infallible*. If each can *err separately* and *afunder*, how is it possible that the bare Agreement of their Sentiments should secure them from all possibility of erring? Besides, what shall we say, when we find one *General Council* of *Popish Prelates* with the *Pope* at their Head, making Decisions quite contrary to another *General Council*, with the *Pope* at their Head too. And this very Dispute about their Authority furnishes us with a notorious Instance of it. The Counsels of *Constance* and *Basil* have both defin'd the Superiority of a *General Council* above the *Pope*, and have founded their Decisions upon several Texts of Scriptures, such as *tell the Church*, the Church being call'd the *Ground and Pillar of Truth*, and other Passages as little to the purpose as these. And as they accounted themselves the *Representative* of the Christian Church; so they interpret these Texts, as setting up the Authority of *General Councils* as the *Supreme Tribunal* of *Holy Mother Church*, to which they assert the *Pope* himself is subject. On the other Hand, the *General Councils* of *Florence* and *Lateran* headed by a *Pope*, have as positively defin'd the Superiority of a *Pope* above a *General Council*, and grounded their Decision upon such Passages of Holy Scriptures, as that of *Peter's* being the *Rock on which the Church is built*, his having the *Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven* committed to him, his being commission'd by Christ to *feed his Sheep and Lambs*, and others of the like import. And if their Exposition be infallible, these Texts set the *Popes Tribunal* above that of a *General Council*, and exempt the *Universal Pastor* (as they account the *Pope*) from any subjection to his *Sheep and Lambs*. Now 'tis manifest, that these papal Councils have either on the one side or the other, grossly mistaken that Sence of the Holy Scriptures in these their contradictory Decisions. And how shall a devout Roman-Catholick know, which is the true Sence of the Holy Scriptures, in the Judgment of *Holy Mother Church*, when he sees such contrary Expositions of them authoriz'd by a *Pope* and *Council* on the one side and the other? But the Truth is, it was a Capital Error on both sides, to set up any meer *Human Tribunal*, to whom all Christians ow'd Subjection (of which anon)

Upon the whole we may see, to how little purpose that *Trent Council* sends us to *Holy Mother Church* to learn the true Sence of the Scriptures, as the proper Judge of it, when they cannot to this Day agree who *She* is, in whom this judicial Authority resides, And to whom we must have recourse for this infallible Exposition of the Holy Scriptures.

But what I would chiefly observe under this Head, is, that the setting up such an *Infallible Human Authority*, whose Judgment we must absolutely rely on for understanding the Sence of the *Written Gospel*, is in effect, the preaching another Gospel to us besides that which we have received. For since 'tis not the bare *Letters or Words*, but the genuine Sence of the *written Gospel*, the

that is truly the Gospel; since 'tis not the bare Words, but the *Intention* and *Will* of the Law-giver signify'd by them, that are properly his Law; the setting up such a *Human Infallible Interpreter* of the written Gospel to whose Judgment all true Christians must pay an absolute Submission, is to make Men and not Christ the Masters of our Religion, and Law-givers to the Church. 'Tis their Decisions not his, are the immediate and supreme rule of our Faith and Practice. 'Tis the Gospel of Holy Mother Church (i. e. of Popes or Councils) that we are bound to believe and obey. For the written Gospel of Christ, 'tis but an heap of incens'd Characters (as one of their Writers call it) that must derive all it's obligatory Force from the Interpretation which this Chimera call'd Mother Church puts upon it. And what greater Affront than this can they offer to the written Gospel of Christ, and to the blessed Author of it? For what other end did he direct his Apostles to publish his Gospel, for the use of his Church in all succeeding Ages, in their inspired Writings, but to instruct us in all the necessary matters of our Faith and Practice? But how are they capable of attaining this end, if we cannot learn from them what we ought to believe and do in order to Salvation, till some Infallible Expositor (and who that is they cannot agree themselves) be pleas'd to interpret them for us? Either the Spirit of Christ could not direct his inspired Apostles, to speak and write his Mind in as intelligible Words as Popes and Councils can use, or would not. To say he could not, is Blasphemy. To say he would not, is to arraign and reproach his Wisdom and Goodness. 'Tis true indeed that Men of perverse minds may wrest the Holy Scriptures to their own Destruction. But so may they as easily wrest any human Writings whatsoever. And so either the Jansenists or the Molinists wrest the Decisions of the Trent Council, each side alledging them in favour of their opposite Schemes, relating to the Operations of Divine Grace, in the conversion of Men. But we cannot suppose the Scripture to be Written to any valuable end, worthy of Divine Wisdom, if Men of sincere and humble Minds, cannot upon the most diligent Search of them, find out what is necessary to be believ'd and done in order to their own Salvation, till some Infallible Judge give them an Authentick Exposition of them. And to set up such a Judge is to make him instead of Christ, the Master of our Religion, and the Author and Finisher of our Faith.

III. They have under the pretence of having such an infallible Judge among 'em, establish'd many Doctrines and Practices as necessary to Salvation, which neither Christ nor his Apostles have reveal'd or injoy'd; nay many that are plainly contrary to what is reveal'd and injoy'd in his Written Gospel.

And 'tis here I would chiefly fix the charge of their Preaching another Gospel then (or besides) that which we have Received.

'Tis the principal design of the Gospel of Christ, to declare to us upon what Terms guilty Sinners may be restor'd to the favour of God, brought into a State of acceptance with him, and obtain that Eternal Salvation that he has purchas'd for us. And therefore whoever pretend to an Authority of imposing on the Consciences of Men, such things, to be believ'd and done in order to their Justification and Salvation, which our Lord Jesus has neither by himself, nor by his Inspir'd Apostles deliver'd to his Church, do certainly incur this Guilt, of Preaching another Gospel besides that which we have Received; And 'tis a further aggravation of their Guilt, when they make such Doctrines and Practices Necessary to Salvation, as are contrary to what Christ and his Apostles have Taught and Injoy'd.

And to make good this Charge against the Guides of the Romish Church, I shall produce the publick Profession of the Faith of the Romish Church, set forth by Pope Pius the 4th. pursuant to the Order of the Council of Trent.

In this Profession of Faith, after a Recitation of the Articles of the Nicene Creed, They thus go on.

" I do firmly Receive and imbrace the Apostolical and Ecclesiastical Traditions, and other observances and Constitutions of the said Catholick and Apostolick Church. I Receive the Holy Scriptures according to that Sence of it, that Holy Mother Church, to whom it belongs to Judge of the true Sence and Interpretation of it, has held, and doth hold. Nor will I take and Interpret it otherwise than according to the unanimous consent of the Fathers. I profess that there are truly and properly Seven Sacraments of the New Law, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, and necessary to Salvation of Mankind, tho' not all to every one, viz. Baptism, Confirmation, Penance, Extreme Unction, Orders, and Matrimony; And that they confer Grace, and that of these Baptism, Confirmation and Orders, cannot without Sacrilege be repeated. I also Receive and admit the Receiv'd and approv'd Rites of the Catholick Church, in the Administration of all the aforesaid Sacraments; I Imbrace and Receive all and every thing that has been defin'd in the Holy Council of Trent, concerning Original Sin and Justification; I acknowledge also that in the Mass, there is a true proper Propitiatory Sacrifice Offer'd to God for the Living and for the Dead; And that in the most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist, the Body and Blood of Christ with his Soul and Divinity are Really, Truly and Substantially, and that there is a Conversion made of the whole Substance of the Bread into the Body, and whole Substance of the Wine into the Blood, which conversion the Catholick Church calls Transubstantiation; I also confess, That under each kind alone, whole and entire Christ, and the true Sacrament is taken; I steddily hold that there is a Purgatory, and that the Souls detain'd there may be reliev'd by the Suffrages of the Faithful; as also that the Saints Reigning together with Christ, are to be Worshipp'd and Pray'd to, and they do Offer Prayers to God for us, and that their Reliques are to be Worshipp'd; I most firmly assert, That the Images of Christ and the Virgin Mother of God, and of other Saints ought to be had and retain'd, And that due Honour and Worship is to be given to 'em. I affirm that the power of Indulgences was left by Christ in his Church, and that the use of them is very salutary to Christian People, I acknowledge the Holy Catholick and Apostolick Roman Church, to be the Mother and Mistress of all Churches. I promise and Swear true Obedience to the Pope of Rome, the Successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Jesus Christ; I do also without all doubting, receive and profess all other things deliver'd, defin'd and declar'd by the sacred Canons, and General Councils, and especially by the most Holy Synod of Trent; And I do also Condemn, Reject and Anathematize all things contrary thereto, and all Heresies Condemn'd, Rejected and Anathematiz'd by the Church. This true Catholick Faith, without which no Man can be sav'd, which at present I truly and sincerely hold, I will, (by Gods help) Retain and Profess whole and inviolate to the last Breath of my Life, &c.

And 'tis worthy of our Observation, That this very Profession of the Romish Faith was Verbatim inserted in that Abjuration that was by such Cursed Violence extorted from so many of the Protestants of France, in that Last Persecution, that has reduc'd the reform'd Churches there to their present deplorable Desolation. And we must expect that the same would be impos'd on our selves, if ever we should fall under the Tyrannical Yoak of that Apostate Church.

And now tell me, Does this look like the Gospel of Christ, which his Apostles have delivered? Or is it not manifestly another Gospel.

The Written Gospel of Christ is (Blessed be God) in our hands. I hope the most of us can truly say, we have read it with Attention and Care, and with a sincere and Impartial willingness, and an humble dependance on Divine Illumination, to find out the Mind of Christ Reveal'd therein. But we must profess, That as to all these New Articles which this Trent-Creed has superadded to the Ancient Symbols of the Christian Faith, and made the belief of 'em necessary to Salvation, we cannot find one of them reveal'd in his Written Gospel, and much less made a necessary condition of our Salvation there. We cannot find the least shadow of Proof, That St. Peter was constituted by Christ, Prince of the Apostles, much less that he ever Assign'd over this his Princely Authority and Supremacy to the Bishops of Rome, in all successive Ages; or that Christ ever constituted them as his Vicars in his Headship over the Universal Church. We find nothing there, of the Mass-Sacrifice; The Invocation of Saints; The Worship due to their Images and Reliques; of Purgatory; Indulgences; or of that Absurd and contradictory Article, of the Roman Church, being the Catholick Church; or of it's being the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, &c. Our Protestant Writers have with the clearest Evidence shown, That these New Articles of Faith have no Foundation in the inspir'd Writings of the Old and New Testament. And as to many of 'em, their most Celebrated Writers have referr'd us for 'em to that Supplemental Rule of Unwritten Traditions. And even here our Learn'd Protestant Writers have hunted 'em out of this Wood of Human Traditions, and shown, That these New Articles of theirs were unknown to the Christian Church for several of it's first and purest Ages. And that these pretended Catholick Traditions are but Modern Inventions.

But this is not our only complaint against them, that these Articles they have superadded to the Ancient Creeds, are a New Gospel. For we have this further to add, that we cannot receive and observe many of those New Articles which they have thus made necessary to Salvation, without disbelieving the Doctrine of the Written Gospel, and disobeying the Commands of Christ deliver'd therein.

It cannot be expected that I shou'd enlarge on this Head, by considering each particular Article of this new Romish Faith, which we assert to be contrary to the Written Gospel. That wou'd require a large Volume. I shall therefore content my self with mentioning a few of these forcited Articles of the Romish Faith, and pointing out such Passages of the Holy Scriptures, as are opposite to 'em, (referring you to those Protestant Writers who have fully shewn the inconsistency of the Romish Faith, in these controverted Points, with the Doctrine of the Bible.)

Thus for Example, We cannot believe St. Peter to have been constituted by Christ the Prince of the Apostles, when Christ himself expressly forbid any such contest among 'em, who shou'd be greatest, Luke xxii. 24, 25, &c. And when the rest of the Apostles are equally made with the Prophets, the Foundation on which his Church is Built, and be

alone the Corner Stone of it, Eph. xi. 20. We cannot believe Christ to be daily Offer'd up as a true and proper and propitiatory Sacrifice in the Mass, when the Gospel so plainly declares, That he was offer'd up once for all, Heb. ix. 25. That where Remission of Sins is obtain'd, there is no more Offering for Sin, Ver. 10. And that no Unbloody Sacrifice can be Propitiatory, Ver. 12. Since without shedding of Blood there is no Remission of Sins, Ver. 18. We cannot believe that Religious Invocation is due to any Deceased Saint, when our Lord so expressly faith, Thou shalt Worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. And when Angels themselves refus'd any such Religious Homage, with a See thou do it not, Worship God, Rev. xix. 10. Chap. xx. 9. We cannot pay Religious Veneration to Images, while the Second Commandment stands in the Decalogue, and was never repeal'd by Christ, or his Apostles. We can never believe such a gross cheat as that of Papal Indulgences to be Salutory to Christian People, when God has no where given the Roman Popes any power to remit any part of the Punishment of Sin due to his Justice. We can never believe Deceased Saints to be Mediators of Intercession, when the Gospel so plainly tells us, That as there is one God, So there is one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, 1 Tim. ii. 5. We can never believe that Christ hath set up any Human Infalible Judge of the sense of the Scriptures, when he has so plainly declar'd himself to be the only Master of our Religion, xxiii Matt. 10. We can never believe the Monstrous absurdities of Transubstantiation, without renouncing our Bibles, as well as our Sense and Reason, when the Apostle so expressly calls, what is Broken and Eaten, what is Pour'd out and Drunk in the Celebration of the Eucharist, after what they call the Consecration of it, the Bread and the Cup (or Wine) 1 Cor. ii. 26. 27. We can never Receive all the Numerous Rites or Ceremony's that are Receiv'd by the Romish Church, without Renouncing instead of Standing fast in that Liberty, wherewith Christ has made us free, Gal. v. 1. From the Traditionary precepts of Men. We can never admit all the Observances and Constitutions of the Roman Church, when several of them are so notoriously contrary to the Commands of Christ.

I shall here only mention Two remarkable Constitutions of the Romish Church that carry a manifest Contrariety to the Written Gospel of Christ.

The One is that which relates to the Holy Eucharist, or the Supper of our Lord.

"The Council of Constance declares, determines, and defines, That tho' Christ did after Supper Institute and Administer to his Disciples this venerable Sacrament in both kinds, of Bread and Wine; And tho' in the primitive Church it was receiv'd by the Faithful in both kinds, yet notwithstanding that, since that this Custom was reasonably introduc'd, to avoid dangers and Scandals, That the Sacrament shou'd be receiv'd by the Priests that said Mass, in both kinds, and by the People in one only; and since it ought to be firmly believ'd, that the entire Body and Blood of Christ is contain'd in either kind; and since this Custom is reasonably introduc'd and long observ'd by the Church and Holy Fathers, it ought to be had for a Law, which none must reject or alter at their pleasure.

Accordingly that Council denounces their Anathema against all that assert, That the Faithful are by Divine Precept oblig'd to Receive in both kinds, or that the Church had not reason to debar the People of the Cup, or hath Erred in so doing.

We see here a Traditional Constitution of the Romish Church, relating to a Custom of a very late standing, set up with a Non-obstante to the Infir-

tion and Example of Christ, and the acknowledg'd Practice of the Primitive Church, nay of the Universal Church for near a Thousand Years. 'Tis Christ's positive Command to all that are Communicants at his Table, in reference to the Cup (or Wine) Drink ye all of it. And if this Command extend not to the Laity, There is no Command for their Communicating at all. 'Tis on the contrary, establish'd as a fixed Law in that Church, That none but the Officiating Priest shall Drink of it. And here is an *Anathema*, denounc'd with an unparalleled impudence, against all that observe Christ's Institution, in opposition to this Law, or that charge them with Error in Altering and Curtailing the Institution of Christ, and setting up their Novel Constitution in opposition to it; and to the Practice of the Primitive Church.

'Tis another Constitution and Ordinance of the Romish Church, That their publick Worship shall be Celebrated in the Latin Tongue. A Tongue unknown to the Generality of those that should joyn in their Worship. But let any impartial Man compare this Constitution with the Apostles Direction to the Church of Corinth, Eph. i. xiv. against Speaking in the Church in an unknown Tongue, without Interpreting what is said, and the Reasons of that Direction, especially that drawn from the necessity of our understanding Publick Prayers, and Publick Instructions, in order to our being Edify'd by 'em, and if he can reconcile this Constitution with the Apostle's Advice and Reasoning, he need never despair of reconciling the grossest Contradictions.

Upon the whole we see, That unless we Receive as Necessary Articles of Faith all these Articles of the *Trent-Creed*, tho' we can find none of them in the Written Gospel, nay tho' we find several of them Inconsistent with it; unless we Observe all the Constitutions and Rites that now obtain in the Romish Church, as Necessary Rules of Practice, tho' we can discern no Warrant for them in the Written Gospel, and tho' many of 'em are directly opposite to the Commands of Christ, we cannot be Sav'd according to this Profession and Standard of the Romish Faith. What is this less, then the making the Decisions of the Pope and this pack'd Council, the Gospel we are to Believe and Obey in order to Salvation, and the making them the Lords of our Faith, and Lawgivers to the Universal Church. This Gospel of theirs we are sure is very different from the Gospel of Christ, and in many important Articles, manifestly Repugnant to it.

And as they are thus manifestly guilty of Establishing another Gospel, containing other terms of acceptance with God, and of Eternal Salvation, than we find in the Written Gospel of Christ, so 'tis a dreadful aggravation of this guilt, that they are not content with receiving this new Gospel themselves, without obtruding it upon the rest of the Christian World. For as if it were not enough for 'em to brand all that Receive not this New Papal Gospel, under the odious Name of Hereticks, and so to exclude the far greater part of the Christian World from all possibility of Salvation; They have endeavour'd to propagate it by all the means of Force and Violence, of barbarous and inhuman Cruelty. A blind Zeal for their new Romish Faith has prompted 'em in so many treacherous Massacres to shed such vast Torrents of the Blood of pretended Hereticks. Of which this Day reminds us of a memorable instance in this Kingdom, where in the Lives of 200,000 Protestants, were without any provocation on their part, offer'd up a Sacrifice to Papal Rage; And the perfidious Murder was hallow'd by a Papal Indulgence, that promised no less than the Pardon of all Crimes, how atrocious soever, to the inhuman Murderers, as a reward of their service to the Papal Cause. 'Tis a blind Zeal for their new Gospel, that kindled

so many Fires in the several parts of Europe, for Consuming those that refus'd to Imbrace it.

'Tis this has produc'd so many Sanguinary Laws of Popish Princes, at the Instigation of the See of Rome, and the rigorous Execution of 'em. 'Tis this blind Zeal that has set up that Bloody Inquisition-Tribunal, as the great Rampart of this New Romish Faith, whose methods of Exquisite Cruelty, have justly rendred it the Terror and Execration, not only of all Protestants, but of many Popish Countries themselves, whom the earnest Sollicitations of the Court of Rome cou'd never prevail upon to set it up. 'Tis a blind Zeal for this new Romish Faith, that has of late incited 'em in France, to imploy Missionary Dragoons, for the Conversion of pretended Hereticks, who by Brutal and Barbarous Force, compell'd 'em to Profess with the Mouth, what they knew they never believ'd with the Heart. So that this Romish Faith cannot be more contrary to the Written Gospel, than these Violent and Sanguinary Methods of propagating it, are contrary to the Spirit and Genius of the Christian Religion, and to the blessed Author of it, who Professes, He came not to destroy the Lives of Men, but to Save 'em; Who shed his own Blood in defence of his Doctrine, not the Blood of others, for refusing to imbrace it.

I shall add under this General Head,

IV. The Guides of the Romish Church, in order to support this New Romish Gospel, have done their utmost to deprive the People of the Written Gospel of Christ.

The Authority of their Trent Council, is of all others most Sacred amongst 'em. Now the Fourth Rule of the Index, publish'd by the Orders of that Council, (and set forth by the Authority of Pope Pius IV. and since by Clement VIII, and latlier Enlarg'd by Alexander VII.) Commands, "That no Persons be allow'd to Read the Scriptures in their own Tongue, without Licence under the Hand of the Bishop or Inquisitor, by the Advice of the Priest or Confessor concerning the Person's fitness for it, and whosoever Reads it without such a Licence is declar'd, Incapable of Absolution. And of this Prohibition they assign this Reason, viz. That 'tis manifest by Experience, That if the Reading of the Holy Bible be commonly permitted in the Mother Tongue, more Harm then Good will arise from thence thro' the Rashness of Men.

But least this Rule shou'd not lay Restrain enough upon what they account so Dangerous a Practice, as the People's Reading the Bible; Pope Clement the VII. in his Observations on this Rule of the Index, does plainly deny any New Power to be given by this Rule to the Bishops or Inquisitors, to give such Licenses; And that all Power of granting 'em is taken away from 'em by the use of the Holy Roman Universal Inquisition, which is (saith he) to be Inviolably observ'd.

These Passages need no Commentary upon 'em, They plainly discover the Sentiments which the Guides of that Church entertain concerning the great Danger they apprehend from the People's reading the Written Gospel of Christ. Tho' if you desire a Commentary on 'em, I cannot give you a better, then the Advice which the Bishops met at Bononia presented to Pope Julius the III. in order to the Restoring and Establishing the Dignity of the See of Rome.

"That Advice 'say they, which is greatest and weightiest of all, we have reserv'd to the last, That by all means, as little as may be of the Gospel, especially in the Vulgar Tongue, be read in the Citys under his Jurisdiction. And that little which is in the Mass ought to be sufficient,

" sufficient, nether shou'd it be permitted to any
 " Mortal to read more. For as long as Men were
 " contented with that little; all Things went well
 " with us. But quite otherwise since more was com-
 " monly read. For this in short (say they) is
 " that Book which above all others has raised
 " those Storms and Tempests, which we are al-
 " most carried away with. And in Truth, if any
 " one diligently considers it, and compares it with
 " what is done in our Churches, he will find them
 " very contrary to each other; and our very
 " Doctrine to be not only different from it, but
 " Repugnant to it. [See Confil. de stabilienda Rom. sede
 p. 6. Cited by Dr. Stillingfleet Disc. of the Idolatry
 of the Church of Rome. p. 201, 222.]

The Confession they here make is very Fair and
 Ingenuous. But the Advice they Ground upon it,
 Cursed and Detestable. And indeed no Man can
 imagine any other reason of this daring and im-
 pious Attempt of theirs, to wrest the Written
 Gospel of Christ out of the hands of the People,
 but that they are conscious to themselves that 'tis
 no way Favourable to this New Gospel of the Ro-
 mish Faith. Were the Romish Faith entirely confor-
 mable to the Written Word of God, the more
 Men read it, the more they would discern it to
 be founded on divine Authority, and therefore the
 more readily and firmly imbrace it. But they have
 found by Experience, that where the true Oracles
 of God are generally Read; their False Oracle at
 Rome loses its Authority and Credit. That the
 more the People are conversant in the Holy Scrip-
 tures, the more they discover and dislike the ma-
 nifold Errors, the Idolatry and Superstition, and
 gross Corruptions of the Romish Church: That
 where the Light of the Written Gospel shines, it
 lays open the Darknes and Delusions of their
 New Gospel, to publick View. And what shall they
 do in this Case? To conform the Doctrines and
 Practices of their Church to the Written Gospel of
 Christ, would lead them to Confess their Manifold
 Errors and Corruptions, to renounce their past splen-
 did Pretences to Infallibility, to quit their Tyranni-
 cal Imposition on the Consciences of Men, to re-
 nounce the Papal Headship, and to restore to all
 Christians that Right of Judging for themselves, in
 matters that concern their eternal Salvation, which
 they had so successfully persuaded them to give up,
 nay to restore our Blessed Lord to that Sole Em-
 pire over Conscience that his pretended Vicar had
 Usurp'd so long, and so Enrich'd and Aggrandized
 himself by the Usurpation of. And this was what
 their Ambition and Worldly Interest could not be
 reconciled to. And therefore they have chosen
 to do their utmost to take the Written Gospel of
 Christ out of the Peoples Hands, that they might
 more effectually establish their own. They not only
 set up themselves as the Sole Interpreters and Judges
 of the Sense of his Written Gospel, but will not al-
 low the Laity to Read it, lest they should (like
 the Noble Bereans) compare their Commentary with
 the Text, and so be tempted to call the Exposi-
 tions of Holy Mother Church into Question. They
 found, that a profound Ignorance of the Holy
 Scriptures in the Laity, was the surest Foundation
 to Build Implicit Faith, and Blind Obedience upon.
 And since this Sacred Book and their Romish Faith
 could not stand together, they have indeavoured
 to lock it up among their Prohibited Ones. And
 to deter the Laity the more effectually from read-
 ing it, without a License, (which they rarely ever
 Ask, and is more rarely Granted) 'tis made so hai-
 nous a Crime, as to render them incapable of Ab-
 solution. Monstrous Impiety! Is it such a Crime
 for the Members of Christ to Read their Saviours
 Testament, without the leave of a Popish Bishop
 or Priest, that 'tis not to be Forgiven? Is it such
 a Damnable Sin to Read that Word of Life, which

is to all the Children of God, as their Spiritual
 Food and Nourishment? Or is it not rather a Crime
 of the first Magnitude, in those that pretend to be
 their Spiritual Guides, to forbid it to them, under
 so severe a Penalty?

I have insisted the longer upon this, because there
 is at this very time a particular Occasion to take
 notice of it. Your publick News takes great No-
 tice of a Bull of the present Pope, Entituled Uni-
 genitus. The design of that Bull is to condemn a
 great Number of Propositions taken out of a Book
 of Father Quesnel's. Most of these Propositions re-
 late to the Efficacy of Divine Grace, in the Conver-
 sion of Sinners. But a great many of them relate
 to the General Doctrine that all Protestants hold,
 and which some of those called Jansenists in the
 Romish Church agree with them in, Concerning
 the Right of all Christians to Read the Holy Scrip-
 tures, and their Obligation to it, in order to their
 Understanding the Mind of Christ revealed there-
 in. The Propositions are these that Follow;

" PROP. 79. 'Tis profitable and necessary in
 " in all times, all places, and for all sorts of Per-
 " sons to Study and know the Spirit, Piety and
 " Mystery of the Holy Scriptures.

" PROP. 80. The Reading of the Holy Scrip-
 " tures is for all.

" PROP. 81. The sacred Obscurity of the Word
 " of God, is no Reason for the Laity to dispense
 " with themselves in the Obligation of Reading it.

" PROP. 82. The Lords-Day must be Sancti-
 " fy'd by Christians, with Reading Pious Books,
 " and above all the Holy Scriptures. Its preju-
 " dicial to think of withdrawing a Christian from
 " the Reading thereof.

" PROP. 83. Its an Illusion to persuade ones
 " self, that the Knowledge of the Mysteries of Re-
 " ligion must not be imparted to Women, by Read-
 " ing the sacred Books, &c.

" PROP. 84. To snatch the New-Testament out
 " of the Hands of Christians, or to keep it shut un-
 " to them, by depriving them of the Means of
 " Understanding it, is to shut to them the Mouth
 " of Christ.

" PROP. 85. To forbid Christians the Read-
 " ing of the Holy Scriptures, especially of the
 " Gospel, is to forbid the Use of Light to the
 " Children of Light, and to make them suffer a
 " sort of Excommunication.

These Propositions the present Pope, not only De-
 clares to be False, Scandalous, Pernicious, Injurious to
 the Church and her Practice, Blasphemous, suspected
 of Heresie, &c. often Condemned, and in fine, Here-
 tical, &c. But has in effect, Excommunicated all
 those in France, that Accepts not his Bull that
 Condemns them, and declares them to be Separat-
 ed from the Charity and Communion of the Church.
 And 'tis against this Sentence that Cardinal de Noailles,
 and several of the Popish Clergy in France have
 Appeal'd, to what they call a General Council. [See
 the Preface.] This plainly shews us, that the Spi-
 rit that animates the Papal See, is still the same:
 That a Liberty for the People to Read the Writ-
 ten Gospel of Christ, is still their Mortal Aversion.
 And that they are sensible nothing can support their
 New Gospel, (viz. The Romish Faith) but the Sup-
 pressing of the Written Gospel of Christ, and keeping
 their People in Ignorance of it.

Having now in these several Particulars prov'd,
 that the Guides of the Romish Church are truly
 chargeable with the Guilt mentioned in the Text,
 I proceed,

Secondly, To consider how far this Censure of
 the Apostle is Applicable to them, if any Man Preach
 any other Gospel, besides that which you have Re-
 ceived, let him be Anathema.

None can Read the Proceedings of Papal Coun-
 cils, which they so falsely call General Ones, and
 particularly

particularly of that of *Trent*, without Observing, that they have been very liberal of their *Anathemas* or Curses, against all that dissent from any of their Decisions, how Groundless and False, nay how Trifling and Frivolous soever. What they want of Proof from the Holy Scriptures for supporting the Articles of their New Romish Faith, they have endeavour'd to supply with fixing the odious Brand of Heresy, on all that oppose them, and boldly pronouncing them Accursed. But while we can find no Warrant for them in the Written Gospel of Christ, nor indeed can reconcile them with it, let us not be affrighted with such rash Curses as these, they are like to fall back on the Heads of those that so arrogantly dart them. They may pronounce us Accursed, but our Saviour has pronounced all those *Blessed*, that *bear the Word of God and keep it*, Luke xi. 28. that *keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus*, Rev. x. 12. And if we are entituled to his Blessing, their uncharitable Curses can do our Souls no harm. And Blessed be God, our Bodies are now no longer liable to the usual sting of them, Fire and Faggot, Racks and Gibbets.

But here is an *Anathema* in my Text that is truly Terrible. And I can find none more directly liable to it, than the Guides of the Romish Church. And if they cannot clear themselves from the Guilt mentioned in my Text, (as I am persuaded they never can) let them look to it. And they will find all their confident Pretences to Infallibility no Shelter against it. Who could pretend to greater Authority in the Church than the Apostles of Christ, yet (saith this Apostle) if we (the Apostles of Christ) *should Preach any other Gospel, than that which we have already Preached*, (pursuant to our Master's Commission) we should be Accursed. Nay he goes higher, if an Angel from Heaven, (and sure Romish Popes and Prelates cannot pretend to be equal in Wisdom and Knowledge with the Angels of Light) should bring us another Gospel, he would not be exempted from this *Anathema*: These daring Curses will find, that the Tribunal of Christ is a very different thing from the Tribunal of a Roman Pope, or of his Packed Councils. And they may justly fear that their thus Usurping his Authority, and Perverting his Gospel, and boldly presuming to Curse those whom he Blesseth, and to Excommunicate those whom he Receives and owns, will subject them to this terrible *Anathema*, which he has by the Mouth of his Inspired Apostle, denounced against all that *Preach any other Gospel than we have Received*. And to the Sentence of this Supreme and only Infallible Judge we must leave them. But for our selves we will venture upon a Thousand Papal, rather than on this one Apostolical *Anathema*.

Having gone through what I propos'd to speak to from the Text, I shall conclude with a few Reflections on the foregoing Discourse. And,

I. We may hence see, how vain the Question is, which the Popish Missionarys so usually accost us with, where was your Religion before *Luther*?

We have no other Religion than what is contained in the Written Gospel of Christ, the only compleat Rule of our Faith and Practice. Nay that comprehensive Summary of it, the Decalogue, the Lord's Prayer, and the Creed, commonly called the Apostles Creed, has been received and owned in all Ages. Popery as distinguished from our common Christianity is made up of those Unwarrantable and corrupt Additions that have been made to it, under the pretence of Unwritten Traditions, and the Infallible Authority of the Romish Church, that has upon the most absurd and senseless Pleas, boldly claimed a Dominion over the Faith of Christians. These Unwarrantable and corrupt Additions,

we justly reject, as no where found in the Written Gospel, nay in many Instances manifestly contrary to it. And we justly regard the bold Imposition of these Additional Articles as necessary to Salvation, as a presumptuous Attempt to set up another Gospel than that which we have received. And dare not by owning and receiving them, concur with them in this Guilt, lest we should share with them in this *Anathema* contained in my Text.

II. We may hence see, how inestimable a Blessing that glorious Light of the Reformation is, that has freed us from the insupportable Yoke of Papal Usurpation and Tyranny.

What reason have we to adore the singular Goodness of God to us, that we have the Written Gospel of his Son in our Hands, and may, if we humbly and diligently peruse it, become thereby Wise to Salvation, and thoroughly Furnish'd for every good Work. We can there see with our own Eyes the solid Foundation of our Faith and Practice, and consequently of our Divine Hope, and are no longer like the Blind that follow the Blind, till both fall into the Ditch. Our Lord Jesus is restored to his sole and undoubted Right, viz. a Sovereign Empire over our Consciences, and they are no longer enslaved to the imperious Dictates of those, that would Blasphemously Usurp his Authority, by assuming a Dominion over our Faith. The Light of Uncorrupted Christianity shines among us, and we trust, will more and more prevail, to dispel the Darkness and Corruptions of Popery. We are rescued from the miserable Spiritual Thralldom of Implicit Faith and Blind Subjection to the Traditionary Doctrines and Precepts of Men. The Voice of Christ Speaking to us in his Written Gospel, is heard in our Religious Assemblies. His Institutions are celebrated in their Simplicity and Purity. Creatures are no longer admitted to share with the Blessed God, in any part of that Religious Homage, that is, his incommunicable Right. Our Saviour is not affronted by the pretended repetition of that Sacrifice, that he offered up once for all: Nor is the despicable *Mass-Idol* made the stated Object of Divine Worship amongst us.

We have thrown off that vast load of useless and ludicrous, of vain and superstitious Rites and Observances, by which Religion had been so long turned into pompous Pageantry; the Spirituality of it defaced, and the Life and Power of it, in a great measure, extinguished. And we are concerned to stand fast in that Blessed Liberty, wherewith our Blessed Lord has made us free from the Arbitrary Injunctions of Papal Tyranny. And sure we are unworthy of so distinguishing Blessings as these, if we are not highly thankful for them. We are unworthy of injoying the Light of this Written Gospel, if we do not prize it as our Spiritual Birth-right, and steddily adhere to the Purity of it, in opposition to such as would impose another Gospel of their own upon us.

III. We may hence also see, What a value we should put on those manifold signal Deliverances, whereby a Gracious God has preserv'd the Light of Reformed Christianity among us, and prevented our relapsing into the Darkness and Bondage of Popery.

As we have Reason to bless God, that the Light of the Reformation, that restored to us the Uncorrupted Gospel of Christ, so early shone in those Kingdoms; so have we the same Reason to adore the watchful Care of his Providence, that has discovered and blasted so many dangerous and desperate Attempts of our Popish Enemies, for the Extinction of it. The Barbarities of the Marian Persecution it self, were so far from effecting this Design,

Design, that they served only to bring the cruel Spirit of Popery under a just and general Odium in the succeeding Reign. The *Gun-Powder-Plot* in the next Reign, ended in the deserved Execution of the Villianous Conspirators. And tho' their deep layed Project in 1641. in this Kingdom, was thro' the just permission of a Righteous God more successful, and the Rebellious perfidious Actors were suffered to go a great way, towards Extirpating what they call *Heresy*, by Prodiggally shedding the Blood of so many Thousand Professors of it; yet Divine Mercy seasonably interposed to set some bounds to their destructive Rage, and preserved a Remnant in this City and some other parts of the Kingdom, to be the Seed of a new Protestant Race. The violent and precipitate Steps taken in 1688: for restoring Popery, on the Ruines of the Reformation, were suddenly, but effectually blasted by the noble and Heroick Attempt of that Glorious Prince, whom Divine Providence honoured to be the happy Instrument of our Deliverance. And his Memory will be blessed by our latest Posterity, when that of his Detractors shall Rot. And I hope we shall none of us forget, how seasonably the secret Machinations for imposing a *Popish Pretender* upon us, were prevented by his present Majesty's peaceable Accession to the Throne: And how successfully an open Attempt, by a formidable Rebellion to deprive us of the Blessing of a Protestant Government, was crushed and defeated. These are such illustrious Appearances of Divine Power and Mercy, for preserving the Light of the Gospel to us, (and we trust for transmitting it in this Protestant Line, to succeeding Ages) as we should never look back upon, without Wonder and Gratitude to the Author of our Salvation. And our own great Unworthiness of such signal Blessings, should serve to inhanse them the more, and fill us with admiring Thoughts of his Sovereign Mercy, who has done such great and glorious Things for us, not for our Sakes, but for the Glory of his own great Name.

And sure those pretended Protestants among us have little value for that uncorrupted Christianity, that is delivered to us in the Written Gospel of Christ, and little Sense of the Falschood and Malignity of *Popery*, who look on the Safety and

Happiness we enjoy, under a Protestant Government, with an envious and grieved Eye, who would (if it were in their Power) by setting up a *Popish Pretender*, entail upon us a long Popish Line, that must (humanly speaking) bring along with it the inevitable Ruine of the Reformed Religion as well as of our civil Libertys; and Subject us and our Posterity to Spiritual as well as civil Slavery.

IV. Since we do enjoy this Written Gospel of Christ, let us take care that we Sincerely Believe and Obey it.

'Tis not sufficient, that we reject that New Gospel which the Guides of the Roman Church would impose upon us, and profess to Receive the Written Gospel of Christ as the only compleat Rule of our Faith and Practice. The bare Name of Protestants, or Reformed, will not Save us. The Gospel of Christ it self will not be the Power of God to our Salvation, unless we understand, and cordially Imbrace the Important Doctrines it Reveals; and unless this Salutory Grace of God, that appears to us, effectually *teach us to deny all Ungodliness and Worldly Lusts, and to Live Godly Righteously and Soberly in this present Life.* The Gospel will not Save us, unless it do not only Enlighten but Regenerate and Sanctify us. We then only learn the Truth, as it is in Jesus; when it does effectually ingage us to put off concerning our former Conversation the Old Man with his corrupt and deceitful Lusts, and put on the New-Man, which is created after God in Righteousness and true Holiness. The Gospel contained in these Inspired Books must be Written in our Hearts, and mould us to a Spirit and Conversation futable to its Holy Principles and Precepts, as ever we expect to share in the great and Precious Promises of it. And if we thus sincerely Believe and Obey it, however imperious *Popes* and their inflaved flattering Prelates may, in their blind Zeal, Anathematize and Curse us, our great Redeemer will own and Bless us; He will admit us into his Communion, tho' they may exclude us from theirs. We shall be Acquitted at his Tribunal, who is the Final and only Infallible Judge of the Quick and the Dead.



The sole Headship of Christ over the Catholick Church, in Opposition to the false Claim of the Papal Supremacy over it.

S E R M O N XXXV.

Preach'd at *Woodstreet*, Octob. the 23d 1727. Being the Anniversary of the *Irish* Rebellion in 1641. With some *Inlargements*.

Col. i. 18. The first Clause, *And he is the Head of the Body, the Church.* Compared with Ephes. i. 22, 23.

22. *And hath put all things under his Feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the Church.*

23. *Which is his Body, the Fullness of him that filleth all things.*

WE are under the highest Obligations to the distinguishing Favour of God to us in these Kingdoms, that has caus'd that light of primitive Christianity to shine among us, which for several past Ages had been so greatly obscured by the gross Ignorance and manifold Delusions, the wretched Idolatry and Superstition, and the destructive Tyranny of Popery. And we have just Occasion to adore that kind Providence that has so often and so signally appear'd to preserve this glorious Light of the Reformation from manifold Attempts made for the utter Extinction of it. And since the Roman Pontiff, and the Clergy that pay a servile Subjection to him as the pretended Head of the Universal Church, have been the chief Springs of these pernicious Designs, I have thought it no improper Subject to lay before you the gross Absurdity and mischievous tendency of that arrogant Claim which the Roman Bishops lay to a *Supremacy over the Christian Church*. For this Claim besides it's being an impudent Usurpation of the incommunicable Authority and Honour of our blessed Saviour himself, has been the fatal Engine by which so great a part of the Christian Church has been both grievously corrupted, and miserably inflam'd. And to understand aright how deplorable that *spiritual Slavery* was, is highly requisite to increase our Thankfulness for our happy Deliverance and Freedom from it.

That our Lord Jesus is by the Father's Appointment constituted the *Head of his Church*, and *Head over all things to it*, is too evident from the Holy Scriptures to admit of any Debate about it.

The *Church* here in the Words read, is manifestly to be understood of that *Catholick* or *Universal Church*, that is mention'd in that antient Summary of the Christian Faith, commonly call'd the Apostle's Creed.

This *Catholick* (or, *Universal*) *Church* may be consider'd by us, as measur'd by the unerring Judgment of God. And so it includes all that unfeignedly believe the essential Articles of the Christian Religion, and yield a sincere Obedience to the Laws of Christ's spiritual Kingdom. All such are the *living Members* of that *Mystical Body* of which Christ is the *Head*, and for whose Advantage and Benefit he is *Head over all Things to it*. But if we consider this *Catholick Church* as measur'd by the charitable but fallible Judgment of Men, it comprehends all that make an external Profession of the Christian Faith in the essential Articles of it, and of their Subjection to the Laws of Christ. And those do but abuse the venerable Name of the *Catholick Church*, who confine it within any narrower bounds to the Exclusion of such as really belong to it.

When our Lord Jesus is said to be the *Head* of his *Universal Church*, it implies, that he is both the *Head of Government over it*, and the *Head of vital Influence to it*.

He is the *Head of Government over it*.

Nothing is more common in either sacred or Profane Writers, than to call him that has the chief Authority in any govern'd Society, the *Head* of it. Especially where the *Authority* is *absolute*, as it is in this Case

Care of our Saviour's Authority over his Church, which is his spiritual Kingdom.

And accordingly all the *Jura Majestatis*, all the *Rights of Sovereignty* belong to him.

He has a *legislative Authority* over his Church.

He alone has a just Empire over the Consciences of all his faithful Subjects. Whatever they can discern upon diligent and impartial Enquiry that he has taught (by himself, or by his inspired Apostles) they are bound to believe, pursuant to the Father's Command by a Voice from Heaven, saying, *This is my Well-beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.* Mat. xvii. 5. And whatever particular Laws he has prescribed (by himself, or by those his inspired Apostles whom he commission'd to *Disciple all Nations, teaching them to observe whatever he had commanded them*) they are bound to obey. If this Faith and Obedience be sincere, they are the living Members of his mystical Body. If it be not, they are only Members of it in appearance and external Profession, and have no real Right to the salutary Blessings and Rewards of his spiritual Kingdom. They are but as the *dead Branches* of the *Vine*, or *blasted Ears* in the *Field* of the Church.

The Right of appointing all Offices in his Church, and of appointing the Qualifications, and prescribing the Duties of those that shall be vested in them, belongs to him. And this he actually exercis'd, when he gave to his Church, some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Evangelists, and some Pastors and Teachers. Eph. iv. 11. Tim. i. 3. Tit. i. 1, 2, 3, &c.

And to him it belongs to execute the Laws of his Kingdom, by dispensing the glorious Rewards of it to his faithful obedient Subjects, and the deserved Punishments of it to such as have rejected his offer'd Salvation, or refus'd to obey that Gospel which they pretended to believe. He is for this end constituted by the Father the Final Judge of the Quick and the Dead, and has all Judgment committed to him.

He is also an *Head* of vital Influence to his Church.

He is represented as the *Vine* from which all true Christians as the *living Branches* derive that Sap and Nourishment that renders them verdant and fruitful. All the Members of his mystical Body are animated and guided by his Holy Spirit, and derive from thence all the various measures of Light and Knowledge, of Grace and of divine Consolation and Joy that they are Partakers of. And on that Account, the Church is stil'd by the Apostle the fullness of him that filleth all in all. See John i. 16. Col. i. 19. compar'd with Eph. iv. 16.

And as Christ is the *Head* of his Church, so he is the *Head* over all Things to it.

He tells his Apostles when he gave them their Commission to preach his Gospel to all Nations, *That all Power in Heaven and Earth was given to him,* Mat. xxviii. 18. To him the heavenly Principalities and Powers are subjected; and are employ'd by him as ministering Spirits to minister to them that are Heirs of his promised Salvation. He is appointed the Administrator of the divine providential Kingdom, the King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, in order to the Defence of his Church, and the restraining and conquering the Enemies of it, and must reign till he have put down all adverse Rule, and all Authority and Power, and put all Enemies under his Feet. 1 Cor. xv. 24. 25.

These Declarations of the Holy Scriptures concerning the *Headship* of Christ are so plain and clear as to admit of no Dispute, and are not controverted by those of the *Romish* Communion.

But here arises a Question of the highest Importance between the *Protestant Churches*, and indeed all other Christians that are not subject to the Papacy, and those of the *Romish* Communion, viz. Whether this *Headship* and *Supremacy* over the Universal Church (i. e. Over all Christians dispers'd thro' the several parts of this habitable Earth) be the peculiar and incommu-

nunicable Office and Dignity of our Blessed Saviour himself? Or, whether he has deputed this *Headship* and *Supremacy* to the successive Bishops of Rome, and constituted them his Vicars or Lieutenants on Earth to supply his Place, and to exercise this supreme Authority in his stead, and oblig'd all his professing Subjects to obey them under that exalted Character?

This Claim of the Bishops of Rome, how wild and extravagant, how insolent and arrogant soever it may appear, is the very Foundation of Popery, as it stands oppos'd to the Reformed Religion. If indeed our Saviour himself has constituted every successive Bishop of Rome his Vicar on Earth, and delegated to him the Exercise of his Authority over his Universal Church, obliging all his Disciples and Followers to obey him as his Vicegerent, then all that disown his Authority, and refuse Obedience to him, are out of the Pale of the Catholic Church, and can have no well grounded Hope of Salvation.

But if this Claim be utterly groundless and false, then those Bishops of Rome that make it, are guilty of the most arrogant and daring Usurpation of the peculiar Authority and incommunicable Dignity of the Son of God: And all that own this Papal Supremacy, and submit to it, are sharers in their Guilt, and are in this Point given up to a strong and pernicious Delusion to believe a lie.

That the Successive Bishops of Rome have for several Ages past claim'd such a Supremacy and Headship over the Universal Church, those of the *Romish* Communion will readily own. Tho' they are palpably mistaken in matter of Fact, if they think that their Predecessors have made this Claim ever since the Apostolical Age, or many Centuries after it. As will appear in the Sequel of this Discourse.

But there is no doubt of their having made such a Claim for several past Ages. For not to mention the Decisions of former Popes and papal Councils in this grand Point, their Claim is now fix'd by the last papal Council at Trent, and made a necessary Essential Article of the *Romish Faith*. For in the Profession of what they falsely call the *Catholic Faith*, after such novel Articles of it as those of *Transubstantiation*, the *Sacrifice of the Mass*, the *Invocation of Angels and departed Saints*, *Image-worship*, *Purgatory*, &c. This Article follows, "I acknowledge the Holy Catholic Apostolick Roman Church to be the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, I promise to swear true Obedience to the Roman Pope, successor of blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and Vicar of Christ". And this Article as well as the foregoing is one Branch of that *Catholic Faith*, without which (they tell us) No Man can be sav'd.

Now if our Saviour never appointed any such Vicar on Earth as the Bishop of Rome, then no Words can sufficiently express the monstrous and truly blasphemous Pride of those Roman Bishops, that not only falsely claim such an Universal Authority delegated to them by our Blessed Saviour, but make Obedience to it, necessary to the Salvation of all true Christians. As if we cou'd not belong to the Kingdom of Christ without being the Pope's Subjects; and all were Rebels against the Authority of the King of Saints, who did not own and obey the Roman Pope as his Vicegerent on Earth.

Now to manifest the Absurdity of this most Exorbitant Claim, I shall endeavour to shew

I. There is no shadow of Proof, that our Saviour has delegated this *Headship* over the Universal Church to the Bishops of Rome.

II. That no meer Man is capable of being Christ's Vicar or Vicegerent in the Exercise of his Universal Headship.

III. That the Bishops of Rome for several Ages laid no Claim to such an Headship or Supremacy over

over the Universal Church: Nor was such a Claim generally own'd or submitted to.

IV. The infamous Characters of many such as have made this Claim, farther shews the Absurdity and Falshood of it.

V. That those of the Romish Communion itself, are not agreed about the extent of those Powers which their Popes claim as the Vicars of Christ.

VI. That the manifest Contrariety of the pretended Laws of the Roman Popes, to the Laws of Christ farther shews the gross absurdity and falshood of this Claim.

Of these Heads I shall treat in their Order with all the Brevity that such a Discourse must be confin'd to. And,

I. There is no Shaddow of Proof, That our Saviour has delegated any Headship over the Universal Church to the Successive Bishops of Rome as his Vicars.

The Sum of what they alledge in proof of it is, that our Saviour first delegated this his Headship over the Universal Church to St. Peter, as Prince of the Apostles. And that St. Peter as Bishop of Rome delegated this Headship to all that should Succeed him in that See,

But sure there never was a Claim to so vast, extensive an Authority, built upon so precarious and weak, so false and rotten a Foundation. For both of these Propositions are not only destitute of any probable Evidence, but there are unanswerable Arguments against the Truth of them.

For the first of these Assertions, that our Saviour first delegated his Headship over the Universal Church to St. Peter, by constituting him Prince of the Apostles, the two Passages chiefly alledged from the New Testament for the Proof of it, are those two noted Ones. *Matt. xvi. 18. 19.* And *John xxi. 15, 16, 17.*

For the former Passage *Matt. xvi. 18, 19.* *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock will I build my Church, And the Gates of Hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, And whatsoever thou shalt bind on Earth shall be bound in Heaven, And whatsoever thou shalt loose on Earth shall be loosed in Heaven.* If it appear that this Text ascribes no particular Authority to St. Peter above the rest of the Apostles, and constitutes him no Prince over them; And that other more plain and clear Passages shew the contrary, Then this Text (which is the main strength of their Cause, with respect to the First Proposition) will appear wholly useless to support the Papal Claim.

As will appear upon Examining the particular Expressions contain'd in it.

For that Expression, *Upon this Rock will I build my Church,* It must be either understood of Christ himself, Or (which amounts to the same Thing) of that grand Truth concerning him which St. Peter had then confess'd, *That he was the Son of God.* Or of St. Peter's Person.

If it be understood of either of the two former, the Expression signifies nothing to their Purpose. And it were unreasonable for the Doctors of the Romish Church to understand them otherwise, since the Council of Trent has oblig'd them to interpret the Scriptures according to the General Consent of those they call the Fathers. And they cannot be Ignorant, that they generally expound these Words as our Protestant Writers do, concerning Christ himself, or the Divine confess'd by St. Peter, *That he was the Son of God.*

The Expression cannot be understood of St. Peter's Person abstractedly consider'd. For if the Rock on which the Church is built, be meant the Power by

which it is supported against all Attempts of Earth and Hell, as no less then a Divine Power is sufficient for that End, so it wou'd be down right Blasphemy to assert St. Peter to be the Rock in that Sense. If the Words therefore have any reference to St. Peter himself, 'tis only with respect to the Confession he had made. And this ascribes no more to him than that parallel Text ascribes to the rest, wherein the Church is said to be built upon the Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles, Christ himself being the chief Corner-stone. *Eph. ii. 20.* Which Passage is not to be understood of their Persons abstractedly consider'd, but of the Doctrine they deliver'd by divine Inspiration.

For that Expression, *I will give to thee the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven,* Either it imports no more than that St. Peter shou'd be employ'd to be the first Preacher of the Gospel to the Jews, and to the Gentile-Profelites, which signifies nothing to prove his Supremacy; Or it imports in general, his being a Steward in the House of God (for of that Office the Keys were the Badge) and then it ascribes no Power to him above the rest of the Apostles, to whom the same honourable Appellation and Charge is given *1 Cor. iv. 1.* What can the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven reasonably import more than what is contain'd in the Joynt-Commission of all the Apostles to Disciple all Nations, and admit them by Baptism into the Church of Christ, which is his Spiritual Kingdom? *Matt. xxviii. 19.*

For that Expression of Binding and Loosing, nothing is herein ascrib'd to St. Peter, but what is expressly ascrib'd to the rest of the Apostles, *Matt. xviii. 19.* And Indeed, if by Binding and Loosing be understood according to the known Sense of those Words among the Jews, the declaring what was Unlawful or Lawful, the same Power was given to all the Apostles in their Joint-Commission to Teach all whom they profelited to the Christian Faith, to observe all that Christ had commanded them, Which signifies no more than that they were appointed by our Saviour to be his Heralds to publish his Laws to his Church, for which they were qualified by the unerring Assistance of his Holy Spirit, and furnished with sufficient Credentials of their Mission.

For that Passage, *John xxi. 15, 16, 17.* Wherein our Saviour tacitly reminds St. Peter of his past Fault in the shameful Denial of him by thrice repeating the Question, *Lovest thou me?* And upon his repeated Profession of his Love, thrice requires him to express the Sincerity of it, by Feeding his Sheep, and Feeding his Lambs. 'Tis so far from proving Peter to be constituted the Prince of the Apostles, That the same Exhortation is address'd by the Apostles to ordinary Pastors. Thus the Apostle Paul exhorts the Presbyters of Ephesus, to take heed to themselves, and to all the Flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops, to feed the Church of God, which he had purchased with his own Blood. And the Apostle Peter himself address's the like Exhortations to those Presbyters he writes to, and whose Sym-presbyter (not their Prince) he styles himself, to feed the Flock which was among them (Or, as much as in them lay τὸ ἐκ τῆς ψυχῆς) taking the oversight thereof [πιστοποιεῖτε] not by constraint, but willingly, not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready Mind; Not as Lords over God's Heritage (or, Lotts) but being Examples to the Flock, *1 Pet. v. 1, 2, 3. v.* And we may observe by the way, that if those who for some Ages past have pretended to be St. Peter's Successors be concerned in this Exhortation they have very ill followed it. For besides the manifest Difference between the modest Style of St. Peter and the haughty imperious Strain of Papal Bulls, 'tis too evident, that the Love of filthy Lucre accruing from the scandalous Sale of all Things Sacred, has been the chief Spring of such eager Contests for the Papal Chair; And how insolently they have Lorded it over God's Heritage. How they have used their usurped Authority instead of feeding the Flock of God, to fleece them, and if they proved

Proved refractory to their most unreasonable Injunctions to *butcher and destroy them*, will appear in the Sequel of this Discourse.

But besides the palpable Weakness of their Arguments for St. Peter's being constituted *Prince of the Apostles*, and *Vicar of Christ*, 'Tis an invincible Argument against this groundless Conceit, That St. Peter himself after our Saviour's Death never once mentions this *Supremacy and Headship* of his, and never once claims any Subjection from the other Apostles as due to him by virtue of it. Nor do any of the other Apostles in the Epistles they wrote, give the least intimation of this *Principality and Headship* of his, never once appeal to his single Authority in matters of Debate, or inculcate Obedience to it. They never urge his Decisions to silence those Corrupters of the Christian Faith that arose in their Time, never once directed either *Jewish or Gentile-Christians* to his Tribunal, to end their Difference about the observation of the Ceremonial Law delivered by *Moses*. On the other Hand, we read of the Apostle Paul's withstanding him to the Face, and sharply reproving him, when he so far dissembled for fear of the Jews, as to withdraw himself and separate from the *Gentile-Converts*. Gal. ii. 11, 13. &c. And the same Apostle Paul thus rebukes the Contentions that were in the Church of Corinth, when One said, *I am of Paul*; another, *I of Apollos*; and another, *I of Cephas (or Peter)* with that Question, *is Christ divided?* 1 Cor. i. 12, 13. &c. Could such foolish Contentions have happened if these *Corinthians* had believed St. Peter to be appointed by Christ himself the *Prince of the Apostles*, and Christ's *Vice-gerent on Earth*? Or, could the Apostle Paul, if he believed this fundamental Doctrine of Popery have set himself, (not to mention Apollos) on a Level with St. Peter? Did he not know, that none could belong to Christ but must be St. Peter's Subject, and adhere to him as the *Head of the Catholick Church*, and *Centre of Unity* to it?

But our Saviour himself has put this Matter beyond any reasonable Dispute with Men of unprejudic'd Minds, when long after those Words spoken to St. Peter (Matth. xvi. 18, 19.) on which they chiefly found his pretended *Principality*, he so positively forbids his Disciples to be called *Rabbi*, or *Master*, and tell's them, *they had One Rabbi, or Master, viz. Himself*, and *they were Brethren*. See Matth. xxiii. 8, 10. i. e. They had but One Master of their Religion. And they were all fellow Disciples to him, Now the peculiar Authority which has for several past Centuries been ascrib'd to the Roman Pontiffs far transcends any that this Title of *Rabbi* among the Jews ever implied. How comes then our Saviour to caution all his Apostles against assuming this proud Title, when he had already vested One of them with an Authority far Superior to any that this Title included?

And we may farther observe, that this Debate about Superiority began among the Twelve in our Saviour's Life-time. We read, *that they disputed among themselves, who should be Greatest?* Mark ix. 34. Luke ix. 46. How come they so soon to forget, that (if we may believe the Romish Doctors) Christ had already decided that Question, by appointing Peter to be their *Prince*, and had designed that peculiar Dignity for him to be after his Death his *Vicar or Vice-roy on Earth*?

But does our Blessed Saviour himself give any countenance to this ambitious Dispute of their's? Does he not on the contrary rebuke their foolish and aspiring Thoughts, by setting a little Child before them as an Emblem of Humility, and tells the Twelve, that if any Man desire to be First, (or Greatest) the same should be Last of all, and Servant of all. Mark ix. 35, 36. And how inconsistent is this with assigning to One of them a *Principality* over the rest of his Brethren?

I may make the same Remark upon the Request of the Sons of Zebedee James and John, that they might sit One on his right Hand, and the Other on his left in his Kingdom i. e. be advanc'd to the highest Posts of Honour and Power. A Request that we are told moved the Indignation of the other Ten Disciples. Could they have had the Confidence to make any such Request, if they had known that our Saviour himself had assigned the *Principality* to Peter above the rest, and designed him to be his *Vicar* after his own Decease? And does not their Lord and Master check their ambitious Thoughts by calling all the Twelve to him, and telling them, That, the Princes among the Gentiles exercise Dominion over them, and they that are Great exercise Authority over them, But it shall not be so among you, But whosoever will be Great among you, let him be your Minister; And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant; Matth. xx. 25, 26, 27. In this Language to them all any way consistent with his appointing St. Peter to be their *Prince*, and subjecting them to his *Dictatorial Authority*?

But if the Proof of this First Proposition concerning St. Peter's *Principality* be so miserably weak and precarious, and so contrary to plain matter of Fact, What shall we think of that Second Proposition, on which they found the Papal Supremacy, viz. That St. Peter was Bishop of Rome, and left this *Principality and Supremacy* of his (which they falsely suppose our Saviour vested him in) to all the Bishops that should Succeed him in that See.

And 'tis worth observing to what wretched Shifts the Defenders of the Papal Supremacy are reduced when they go about the Proof of this.

If we may credit the Apostle Paul, the Labours of the Apostle Peter were chiefly employ'd on the Conversion of the Unbelieving Jews, and of the *Gentile-Profelites* to the Christian Faith; as the Apostle Paul's were for the Conversion of the *Idolatrous Gentiles*. For he tells us, that the Gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed to him, as the Gospel of the Circumcision was to Peter. Gal. ii. 7. And this renders their fabulous Pretension of St. Peter's residing 25 Years at Rome, as Bishop of that See, utterly incredible, and in effect taxes him with neglecting the Province which was chiefly committed to him. Besides that this Pretension is no way supported by any credible ancient Writers of Ecclesiastical History. 'Tis so far from that, that we have no satisfying Evidence from the Writers of Antiquity, that St. Peter ever was at Rome at all, (tho' it signifies nothing to the main Point in debate whether he was, or was not.) But 'tis undoubted from sacred History, that he resided some considerable Time at Antioch, so that if St. Peter had any Supremacy to bequeath, the Bishops or Pastors of that Church, would have a much fairer Claim to it. And 'tis a pleasant but just Observation of Dr. Tillotson, that Cardinal Bellarmine was at a great Loss to prove that St. Peter was at Rome, when he draws an Argument from that Passage in his first Epistle, the Church which is in Babylon salutes you. 1 Pet. v. 13, and gravely tells us, that by Babylon he meant Rome. For if St. Peter called Rome Babylon by a Prophetic Spirit, his Interpretation carries no favourable Aspect on that Roman Church that so proudly vaunts it self to be the Mother and Mistress of all Churches, but has been so often since her assuming this arrogant Title, (on the account of her monstrous Pride and deplorable Corruptions) compared to *Mystical Babylon* mentioned in the Revelations by the most serious and judicious Writers of her own Communion.

But let us for once allow them as matters of Fact, That St. Peter was at Rome and suffered Martyrdom there. By what Shadow of Consequence can they infer thence, that he left to all the Bishops that should afterwards be placed in that See, that Authority which they pretend that St. Peter himself was vested in as *Vicar of Christ and Head of the Universal Church*. To

To give some faint Colour to this wild and extravagant Pretension, They first degrade St. Peter from his Apostolical Character to make him Bishop of Rome, (i. e. from One whose Commission was to preach the Gospel to all Nations, they transform him into the fixed Bishop or Pastor of a Particular Church.) And then would have us believe on their bare Word, that he left his pretended Headship and Supremacy over the Universal Church to all the successive Bishops in that See.

But do they offer us any thing that has the appearance of an Argument to justify this bold Pretension? Can they produce us any last Will and Testament of St. Peter wherein he bequeathed this vast Legacy to all that should hereafter sit in that Chair? Do's St. Peter himself in either of his Epistles claim any such Headship himself, or give the least hint of his affixing such an Authority for all future Ages to the Bishops of that Church? And yet if the Apostle Peter had been conscious of any such Supremacy over the Universal Church delegated to him by Christ, with a Power to appoint Successors in it, and had resolved to entail it upon all the successive Bishops of Rome, How absolutely necessary was it to the Peace and Welfare of the whole Christian Church, and to the Salvation of all the Members of it, that he should have plainly declar'd this, and solemnly charged all Christians in future Ages to obey the Bishops of that City as his Successors, and the Vicars of Christ, as ever they expected to be owned by Christ himself as the Subjects of his Kingdom! And it was equally necessary that St. Peter should have told us plainly, By whom these Successors should be chosen, (Whether by the Clergy and People at Rome as they were for several Centuries, or by Emperors, and other Civil Powers, or by a Conclave of Cardinals, whose Office and Dignity is as great a Stranger to the New-Testament as their Name)

And it was as necessary that the Endowments and Virtues that should qualify them for so eminent a Station and so extensive an Authority, should have been specify'd by him; that all true Christians might have some certain Characters to distinguish the true Vicars of Christ from all false Pretenders. For we know in Fact, That since this Claim begun, It has been made by different Rivals at the same Time that have made bold to excommunicate one another with all their Adherents. Manifold Schisms have arisen on this Account in the Roman Church, and particularly that memorable One that lasted 40 Years, between the Popes that sat at Rome, and those that had their Residence at Avignon. And if their mutual Excommunications were not meer bruta Fulmina, In what a desperate Condition must all those Christians be that adhered to the wrong Pope. And shall we ever think that their Salvation depended on the Truth or Falshood of his Title to whom they pay'd their Obedience?

In short if this Doctrine of the Papal Supremacy be a necessary Article of Faith (as the Trent-Confession makes it) We cannot excuse the Apostle Peter himself from the most unpardonable Omission of necessary Directions and Cautions in a Matter of so unspeakable Moment to the whole Christian Church, and even to the Salvation of every Member of it. Nor can we excuse the other Inspired Writers of the New-Testament, That none of them should ever mention St. Peter's Supremacy, nor give us the least hint of his bequeathing it to any Successors. Nor St. John in particular, who surviv'd Peter and wrote after his Death; when there was the most proper and needful Occasion to acquaint the Church to whom the Right of Succession to St. Peter as Vicar of Christ belong'd. He has indeed in his Book of Revelations pointed out Rome as the Mystical Babylon. And that he could not mean Rome Pagan, I have shown in a former Discourse. The Characters are much more applicable to Rome Papal.

This entire Silence of all the inspired Writers of the New-Testament in a Matter of the highest import-

ance imaginable to the whole Christian Church, is instead of a thousand Arguments against this arrogant Claim. And sure it should have it's due Weight with all those Doctors of the Romish Church who have ingenuously own'd, That the Holy Scriptures contain all Things necessary to Salvation, (as some of them have done.)

Upon the whole, we may justly conclude, That there never was a Claim to so vast and extensive an Authority founded upon more chimerical Pretensions; Never such a lofty Tower of Babel built upon such a Quick-sand.

And this will farther appear if we consider,

II. That it argues great Ignorance as well as Presumption for any meer Man to think himself capable of being the Vicar of Christ as Head of the Universal Church. No meer Man is capable of being the Head of Vital Influence to all the Members of Christ's Mystical Body. The enlightning the Renewing and Sanctifying Operations of the Holy Spirit, and his gracious Assistances and Consolations, are in no meer Man's Power to dispense. For tho' the servile Flatterers of the Papacy give the Roman Pontiff that arrogant Title of his Holiness, and many of their slavish Councils have given him that blasphemous One, of our most Holy Lord the Pope; yet the notoriously wicked Lives of many of their Popes as describ'd by their own partial Historians plainly shew, That they were devoyd of all Holiness themselves, and could not communicate to others what they never had themselves.

No meer Man is capable of Dispensing the future Rewards and Punishments of Christ's Spiritual Kingdom. 'Tis not at the Pope's but at Christ's own Tribunal we must all stand. And happy were it for these pretended Vicars of Christ when they make their appearance before his Judgment-Seat, if they could clear themselves from the Guilt of usurping his incommunicable Authority, and abusing their pretended Supremacy so often to the corrupting the Christian Religion, and the Destruction of those that adher'd to the Simplicity and Purity of it.

No meer Man is capable of being the Vicar of Christ in his Legislative Authority over the Universal Church. The Apostles themselves that had their Commission immediately from our Blessed Saviour, were no more than his appointed Heralds to publish the Laws of his Kingdom, not to enact Laws of their own. And no pretended Successors of their's have a more ample Commission than they had. Christians have but One Lord and Law-giver who is able to save or destroy, James iv. 12. None are fit to be intrusted with so transcendent an Authority without that perfect Knowledge and perfect Purity which no meer Man can pretend to. And experience shews us how incapable any meer Man is to exercise it. How great a part of the Christian Church, who have the Gospel of Christ (that Statute-Law of his spiritual Kingdom) in their Hands, are planted in so remote parts of this habitable Earth, that probably they never heard of the Pope's Pretensions to be the Vicar of Christ, nor had the least opportunity of knowing what Decisions he has made in matters of Faith, or what Injunctions and Commands he has issued out. And shall such of them as believe the essential Doctrines revealed in the Gospel, and sincerely obey the Law's of Christ declared therein, be thought incapable of Salvation for want of assenting to the Decisions, and obeying the Commands of the Roman Pontiffs that were never published to them? How monstrously absurd would such a Supposition be? And how visible a tendency has it to destroy that Catholick Charity that our Saviour has made the distinguishing Character of his Disciples! How glaring a Contradiction is there in the very Terms of this Article of the Trent-Creed, The holy Catholick Apostolick Roman Church.

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'Tis as if they had said, All true Christians dispers'd (by that Gospel which the Apostles preach'd) thro' several Parts of this habital Earth, residing at Rome. Or if they mean subject to the Church at Rome as the *Mother and Mistress of all Churches*. This does not solve the gross Contradiction, because no Christians for several Centuries regarded Rome as the *Mother and Mistress of all Churches*; and the far greater Number of Christian Churches at this present never own'd her under that Character, and probably many of them never once heard of her proud Pretensions. So that their very Notion of the *Catholic Church* is grossly *Schismatical*, by confining Christianity to a *Sect*, (and a very corrupt and degenerate one) and their rash *Anathema's* in excluding all other Christians out of the *Pale* of the *Catholic Church* can never reverse that Apostolical Blessing, *Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity*, Eph. vi. ult. And as I doubt not there are many Thousands, nay Millions, in the Reformed Churches whose Consciences can attest the Sincerity of their Love to their Blessed Saviour, evidenc'd by their Care to keep his Commands; so every Member of those Churches that is conscious of the Sincerity of his Love to the Son of God, is as sure of the Falseness of his Papal Claim, as he is that he knows his own Heart.

No meer Man can be the Vicar of Christ, as *Head over all things to his Church*.

The Heavenly Principalities and Powers are not subjected to the Roman Pontiffs. Some indeed of those Pontiffs have in their ranting Fits commanded the *Angels to deliver some Souls out of Purgatory*. But that being an imaginary Prison of their own Invention, their Commands were as vain and insignificant as they were arrogant and ridiculous. But if the Roman Popes practice their own Doctrine of Praying to Angels, 'tis very inconsistent with any Claim of Authority over them. What correspondence those of them whom their own Historians brand as *Magicians*, had with *Infernal Spirits*, I know not. But if all that are Slaves to their own Lufts, be the Devil's Servants, it would be the grossest of Absurdities to suppose the *Holy Angels* subject to the Authority of the *Devil's Vassals*. And such all notoriously wicked Popes were.

And no meer Man is capable of being the *Vicar of Christ* as *Administrator of the divine Providential Kingdom in this lower World*. Nothing but stupid Ignorance and monstrous Pride cou'd induce any Man to pretend to it. To order all the important Events, all the various Revolutions and Changes in Kingdoms and States for the good of his Church in a way of *Correction* or *Mercy* is in no meer Man's Power. 'Tis a Power far superior to that of weak and frail Mortals (as all Men are) that must be exerted for this excellent and glorious Purpose. He to whom it belongs must be *King of Kings and Lord of Lords*, and vested with a Power whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself. Phil. iii. 21.

So that the plain Impossibility of the Thing, The natural Incapacity of any meer Man for the Exercise of any such extensive Authority is a manifest Proof that our Saviour is the only *Head of his Church*, and *Head over all Things to it*, and has left no *Vicar* or *Vice-gerent* on Earth to supply his Place in the Exercise of it.

III. The Bishops of Rome for several Centuries never claimed this Supremacy over the Universal Church, and much less was any such Claim generally own'd and submitted to.

And how utterly unaccountable is it, That if St. Peter left them this Supremacy and Headship as a Legacy, and Christ himself appointed them as his *Vice-gerents* in the Exercise of it; That the Bishops of Rome for several Ages should be wholly ignorant of this vast Authority that belong'd to them; should

never once lay any Claim to it; and that the Churches in the *Eastern* and *Western* Part of the *Roman Empire* (not to mention the Churches beyond the Bounds of it) should never acknowledge any such Claim, or submit to it. So that Tradition itself (which their late *Trent-Council* has for the better Support of their Cause asserted, *be of equal Authority with the Holy Scriptures*) has left this extravagant Claim destitute of any Shadow of Proof to countenance it, as the *Holy Scriptures* have done.

I shall not here expatiate into that vast Field of Antiquity. Any that would have full and convincing Evidence of what I here assert, may find it in that admirable *Treatise* of the Learned and Judicious Dr. Barrow, concerning the *Papal Supremacy*, which has in a great Measure exhausted this Subject.

'Tis true indeed some Sparks of Pride too early appear'd now and then in the Pastors of particular Churches. St. John himself in one of his Epistles mentions one *Diotrephes* who lov'd to have the Preeminence, and who instead of receiving the Brethren, forbade them that would, and cast them out of the Church, and severely censures his Pride and uncharitable Presumption. And so did *Irenaeus* and the *Gallican Bishops* rebuke the Insolence of that *Roman Bishop* (*Vicar*) who rashly presum'd to Excommunicate all that would not observe the same Day for celebrating *Easter* that he did. *Cyprian's* Language to *Stephen Bishop of Rome*, in the Contest they had about a Point relating to Discipline, plainly shews how little difference he pay'd either to his Judgment or Authority; and his frequently asserting the equal Authority of all the Apostles and of all Bishops; plainly shews that he was an utter Stranger to that Paramount Authority that the Bishops of Rome have claim'd for several past Centuries. And we have in this Point the ingenuous Confession of *Aeneas Sylvius*, Cardinal of *Sienna*, † and afterwards advanced to the Papal Chair, *That before* † Epist. the *Council of Nice*, every one (every Bishop and his Church) observed their own Liber I. way, and little regard was had for the Church of Rome. Ep. 288.

But that ambitious Spirit which lay in a great measure Dormant while the Christian Church continu'd subject to the *Pagan Emperors of Rome*, and was so frequently persecuted by them, began to revive upon *Constantine's* Advancement to the Imperial Throne, and his heaping Honours and Wealth upon the Clergy. And the main dangerous Step toward the Nursing up this Spirit of Pride, was the mistaken Policy of casting what they call'd the *Ecclesiastical Government* into the same Mould and Frame with the *Civil*, and assigning some Superiority to Bishops of particular Cities, according to the Higher or Lower Rank of their *Civil Governors* in the *Roman Empire*. And this gave rise to the different Degrees of Superiority claim'd by *Metropolitans*, *Primates*, and *Patriarchs*. Among the last, viz. (*Patriarchs*) were the Bishops of *Rome*, *Constantinople*, *Jerusalem*, *Alexandria*, and *Antioch*. These *Patriarchs* were only design'd at first to have some Superiority and Preeminence in their several large Districts, without any pretence of any one having a Supremacy over the rest, and much less over all the Churches that were within their Districts.

Rome having been long the ancient Seat of the *Roman Empire*, the Bishop of that See was reckon'd first in the *Patriarchal Order*. And *Constantinople* being made the Seat of the Empire in the Reign of *Constantine* and his Successors, The Bishop of that City was allow'd to be next in the *Patriarchal Order*. So entirely had these aspiring Bishops forgotten the solemn Rebuke that our Saviour gave to the ambitious Reasoning of his Apostles, when they disputed among themselves, *Who should be greatest*, and the strict Charge he gave them, *But it shall not be so with you*.

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'Tis true, The Bishops of Rome on this [†] nominal Priority in the Patriarchial Order, studiously endeavour'd to enlarge their Power by interesting themselves in all important Matters of Debate relating to Doctrine or Discipline, and by encouraging all Appeals to themselves for the Decision of such Differences as arose, (such as those about the Election of Bishops where there were different Competitors, or the Deposition of such as were charg'd by Councils with Heresy or Male Administration.) And this occasion'd that noted Contest between Zozimas Bishop of Rome, and a Council of African Bishops, who openly oppos'd all Appeals to Rome. And whereas the Roman Bishop alledg'd a Canon of the Nicene Council to justify such Appeals, they found upon Search this pretended Canon to be a mere Forgery.

But how active soever the Bishops of Rome were to take all Advantages for enlarging their Patriarchial Authority; yet that they lay'd no Claim to a Supremacy and Headship over an Universal Church, sufficiently appears from that remarkable Contest in the beginning of the 7th Century, between John Bishop of Constantinople, and Gregory, the 1st Bishop of Rome.

This Constantinopolitan Bishop (surnamed John the Faster) had the vanity to assume and obtain from the Emperor Mauritius the arrogant Title of *Acumenial* or *Universal Bishop*, (for his frequent Fasting had not mortify'd his Pride.) 'Tis probable indeed that he meant no more by that gaudy Title, than that as Constantinople was then the Seat of the Roman Empire, his being Bishop of that Imperial City, gave him a just Claim to some Superiority over all other Bishops within the bounds of that Empire. But it well deserves our Attention to observe, What the Bishop of Rome saith concerning his assuming this new and vain-glorious Title. Do's he claim the Title as peculiarly due to the Bishops of Rome, as the Vicars of Christ, and Heads of the Universal Church, As his Successors have since done for several Ages? No, on the contrary in his Letters to the Emperor and Empress, to the Bishops of Alexandria and Antioch, He vehemently exclaims against the Title itself as a Name of Blasphemy. He compares it to the arrogant Attempt of Lucifer to set himself above his Fellow-Angels. He asserts the assuming that swelling Title to be a certain Mark and Sign, That Antichrist (that Son of Pride) was at Hand, And that an Army of Priests was prepar'd for him, since those whose Office it was to promote the

[†] Lib. 4. Ep. 32. 34. Reign of Humility, were now setting their Shoulders to advance the Reign of Pride. [†]

Was this Bishop of Rome (tho' a much better one than most of his Successors) the real Vicar of Christ, and the Head of the Universal Church, and did not know it himself? Or if he knew and believ'd himself vested with such a Supremacy as his Successors at Rome afterwards claim'd, Could he in any consistency with his own Pretensions have condemn'd the Title as Blasphemous? Could he compare the assuming it to the Pride of Lucifer the Prince of Devils? Could he make the claiming it a sure Mark and Sign that Antichrist was at Hand, with an Army of Priests ready to set up that King of Pride?

And sure if ever that Living Oracle at Rome (as the Flatterers of the Papacy style every Pope) spoke true, and by a kind of prophetick Inspiration; It was at this Time. For Boniface the 3d, who immediately succeeded this Gregory the 1st, did by flattering Phocas (who murdered his Master the Emperor Mauritius, slew his Wife and Children before his Eyes, and usurped his Imperial Throne) obtain'd from this detestable Usurper this very Title of *Universal Bishop*, and left it as a Legacy to his Successors in the See of

Rome. But how fond soever his Successors were of this arrogant Title, and of the Authority they pretended to as St. Peter's Successors, They could not bring the Eastern Churches to a tame Submission to it, nor even the Western Churches themselves, as evidently appears from the frequent opposition made by several Councils to Papal Decisions.

The Papal Authority was not carried to it's full Height till the Monk Hildebrand by fraud possess'd himself of St. Peter's Chair, under the Name of Gregory the 7th towards the End of the 11th Century. It was this Bishop of Rome (Boniface the 8th) that with a Luciferian Pride renewed this blasphemous Sentence of *We assert, define, and pronounce, That 'tis absolutely necessary to the Salvation of every human Creature to be Subject to the Pope of Rome.* And because it was always found convenient for the credit and support of Papal Usurpation to have the Countenance and Authority of Councils, he called one at Rome, where he got it determin'd, That the Pope alone could make new Laws; That all marks of Empire belonged to him; That he had the Power of deposing Emperors; That all Princes were obliged to kiss his Feet; That his Decrees could be reversed by none, but he could reverse the Decrees of all others; That there is but one Name in the World, And that is the Pope's; That no Book of the Holy Scriptures should be accounted Canonical without his Authority; That he may absolve the Subjects of bad Princes from their Oaths of Fidelity; And to these detestable Decisions this absurd and ridiculous One is added. That a Pope canonically Elected, becomes Holy by the Merits of St. Peter. But sure if Humility be an Essential Ingredient of true Christianity, The Merits of St. Peter must be very great that could transform such Monsters of Pride as well as other Vices into Saints.

A judicious Writer justly observes, That the Decisions of this Pope and Council are as the Text, on which all the Decretals, All the Papal Bulls, All the Decisions of the Doctors of their Canon-Law ever since are so many Commentaries. In them we so commonly read of the Pope's Plenitude of Power, That all Power in Heaven and Earth is committed to him; That no Power is equal to his. That Constantine's pretended Grant of the Roman Empire to Pope Sylvester as St. Peter's Successor, was not properly a Donation, but Restitution. That the Pope had Power to judge all Men, but could be judged by none; That all Laws human and Divine were lodged in the Cabinet of his Breast, and he had the Power of Dispensing with them; That as God created two Lights, The Sun and the Moon, The former is the Emblem of the Papal Power, The Latter of the Power of Emperors and Kings; That the Former surpasses the Latter, as far as the Light of the Sun surpasses that of the Moon; And as the Moon has no Light, but what it borrows from the Sun, so secular Princes derive their Authority from the Pope (An admirable Proof of the Papal Supremacy ascrib'd to the fruitful Invention of Pope Innocent the 3d.)

And that these were not meer empty and idle Speculations, but Maxims put in practice for several Ages, appears beyond Contradiction from the numerous Examples of those Emperors, Kings and Princes whom several of the Successive Bishops of Rome (following the Steps of some of their Predecessors, and particularly of this Gregory the 7th) have excommunicated and deposed, whenever they opposed their ambitious Claims and Projects, and incited their deluded Subjects to Rebellion against them. And what miserable Confusions and Wars these daring Attempts of insolent Popes have occasioned in this part of Europe; And what Torrents of Christian Blood have been shed in these Papal Quarrels whenever

[†] I call it a Nominal Priority, because Equal Privileges were expressly assign'd to the Bishop of Constantinople as to the Bishop of Rome, as appears not only from the General Council at Calcedon, A. D. 451, and the Constantinopolitan Council in Trullo, A. D. 681. See also the 6th Canon of the Nicene Council, A. D. 325, in reference to the Bishop of Alexandria, where 'tis observable that they ascribe the Patriarchal Superiority only to ancient Custom, not to any Divine Institution.

ever Princes had the Courage to defend their own Authority, and were not deterred by their own Subjects, the History of many past Ages furnishes us with undeniable Evidence.

It may appear at first view, Strange and Astonishing to us, that Bishops residing at Rome, and having no large Territories of their own, should be able by a little barbarous Latin, and a bold Pretence to the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, to keep the most powerfull secular Princes in awe, and often to trample on their Crowns; but the Wonder will cease when we Consider the servile Dependance the Roman Pontiffs had brought the rest of the Clergy into, by Appeals being so commonly made to that See, by their claiming the Right of Investitures, by obliging those to whom they granted Investiture to take an Oath of Fidelity and Obedience too themselves, by which they were expressly bound to defend the Papal Authority; by setting up to be the great Patrons of their Ecclesiastical Immunities and Revenues, and by the absolute Sway the Clergy had over the Laity, sunk into profound Ignorance and Corruption, who were thereby only Subjects to their Princes at the Popes Discretion. So exactly was that Prediction concerning the ten Kingdoms, into which the Roman Empire was to be divided, Accomplish'd, that those Kings *should have one Mind, and give their Power and Strength to the Beast*, xvii. Rev. 13. Some of them indeed Struggled to shake off the Yoke of Papal Tyranny when it galled themselves, but seldom with any Success, while the Consciences of their own ignorant Subjects were frightened with the vain Terror of Papal Excommunications, that threatened them with St. Peters Indignation.

This senseless Claim of a Supremacy over the universal Church runs thro' all the Papal Bulls, and all their imperious Decrees and Injunctions are founded on it. And yet this arrogant Claim is at this Day disown'd by the far greater Part of those that Profess the Christian Faith. For the Churches Spread thro' the several parts of Asia, the Ethiopian Churches, the Greek and Muscovite Churches, added to those that have imbraced the Reformation, far surpass in Number those that are subject to the Papal Authority. This Claim had its rise in those Ages, in which deplorable Ignorance, and a general Corruption of Manners notoriously reigned. The Authority claimed is upon the Decline in those parts of the Romish Communion it self, where Learning is reviv'd; and 'tis rejected with just Contempt, wherever the free Liberty of searching into the Holy Scriptures is encouraged. Wherever the true living Oracles of God are heard, this pretended living Oracle at Rome, sinks in its Reputation.

IV. The wicked Lives of those Bishops that have possessed the See of Rome, since this Claim of their Headship over the Universal Church was set up, farther Manifest the gross Absurdity of it.

Let any Man read the Lives of the Roman Pontiffs, since they first assumed this Antichristian Title of Universal Bishops as Wrote by their own Historians, and he will find such an hideous Portraiture of these pretended Successors of St. Peter and Vicars of Christ, especially in the 9th. and 10th. Centuries, as represents them to be greater Monsters of Vice, then are generally to be found in the Infidel World. How many have come to the Popedom by notorious Bribery? How many by external Force and Violence? How many by Poisoning their Predecessors, to make way for their own Elevation? How many have defiled what they called St. Peters Chair, by all manner of Lewdness and Luxury, by unsufferable Pride, by insatiable Avarice, in setting all sacred Things to Sale, and turning the House

of God into an House of Merchandise, and Den of Thieves? How many have been Infamous for inhuman Cruelty? So that one of their own Historians had just Reason to say, *that those were accounted good Popes, that were not more Wicked than other Men.* How ingenious is the Con-

† Genebrard. fession, of one of their own Historians concerning a great Number of 'em, that they were Apostatical, rather than Apostolical! Even their flattering Annalist Barovius, speaking of the Tenth Century, could not forbear to lament the Infelicity of that Age, wherein (he tells us) *the most sordid Whores ruled at Rome, and thrust their bawdy Galants into St. Peters Chair, Men not fit to be Named among Roman Popes, but only to mark out the Iniquity of those Times.* And he leaves his Reader, to Conjecture, what sort of Cardinals and Bishops these Popes would Create, since 'tis natural for all to beget their like.

And can any Man whose Mind is free from Prejudice, ever think such Monsters of Vice and Wickedness, such notorious Slaves of the Devil, and their own Lusts, to be the real Vicars of Christ, and intrusted by him to rule the Universal Church? Can those who were never the living Members of his Mystical Body be appointed by him to be the Heads of it? Can those be the true Successors of St. Peter in his pretended Principality, who had not the least Appearance of his Virtues, but are justly branded for the most gross and shamefull Immoralities? Can those that every way deserved to be excluded from all Christian Communion themselves for their own open and scandalous Crimes, be supposed, intrusted by Christ with the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, to open or shut it at their Pleasure? And yet if these Popes who are thus branded by their own partial Historians, were not the true Successors of St. Peter, and the Vicars of Christ, their boasted Line of uninterrupted Succession is long since broken and extinguished.

V. This Claim of the Papal Supremacy in the Extent, in which the Roman Popes have asserted it, is now disowned by many of the Romish Communion it self.

The Popes Power of deposing Princes, and Absolving their Subjects from their Oaths of Fidelity (which they have so long claimed, so often exercised, and which one of their general Councils has acknowledged) has been disowned by an Assembly of the Clergy in France, and openly opposed by several Writers of the Romish Communion. And 'tis indeed in it self so Absurd, as well as Pernicious, that they begin to be ashamed to own it. But tho' the ill Success of such Wicked and daring Attempts of former Pontiffs (which has occasioned so many Protestant Powers to shake off that ignominious Yoke) has made the Roman Pontiffs of late more cautious of exerting this Branch of their pretended Authority; yet the Claim of it has never been openly disowned by any Bishop of that See, but is still kept up in the Court of Rome, ready to be put in Execution whenever it can be done with safety. So that Popish Princes owe it to the Reformation, that their Crowns sit so fast upon their Heads, in the particular Contests they often have with the See of Rome.

How frequently the Mandatory Bulls of the Roman Pontiffs have been either rejected or palpably Eluded, History gives us abundant Proof. *Jansenism* survives in France, after all Decisions of Papal Authority, for the utter Suppression of it.

The Tribunal of what they call General Councils, has been asserted to be Superiour to the Popes. It has been declared to be so by the Councils of Constance and Basil, who made bold to depose some of these pretended Vicars of Christ, and claimed

an Authority derived from him, to reform the Head, as well as Members of the Universal Church.

And by the Way we may Observe, that the Decisions of these Councils, equally Strike at the pretended Infallibility, as well as Supreme Authority of the Roman Popes. And those Writers of that Communion that reject the Latter, do as Stiffly oppose the Former. A Doctrine very ungratefull at Rome, which they have since got some Councils more inflav'd to the Papal Power to Disavow. And what refined Arts of Policy the Roman Pontiffs, during the Session of the Trent Council were oblig'd to use, to keep their pretended Authority safe and undiminished, we may clearly see from Cardinal Pallavicinus's, as well as Father Pauls History of it.

So that tho' all those of the Romish Church agree in giving the Bishop of Rome, the general Title of the Head of the Church, and the Vicar of Christ, yet they are far from being agreed in the extent of his Authority in the several important Branches of it. Those that are entirely addicted to the Papal Interest enlarging it, (or, rather making it boundless and unlimited) others contracting and confining it to much narrower Bounds. Such woful Confusion there has been among these Builders of Babel, as may remind us of that Vial pour'd out on the Seat of the Beast, that made his Kingdom full of Darknes. Rev. xvi. 10. For these Controversies among themselves about the extent of Papal Authority affect the very Foundation of Popery. For if the Bishops of that See have claim'd such Powers as Christ never vested them in, they ought to be regarded as no better then vile and arrogant Usurpers of an Authority never delegated to them. If they have not, those of that Communion are inexcusable, who oppose the Vicars of Christ in the Exercise of them, and are guilty of Perjury in breaking their promissary Oath of due Obedience to them.

VI. The manifest Contrariety of the pretended Laws of the Roman Pontiffs to the Laws of Christ farther demonstrates the falshood of this impudent Claim.

A Vice-roy has no Power to alter or reverse the Laws of the Prince from whom he derives his Authority. His Attempt to do it is a traiterous Usurpation.

To enlarge on the Proof of this contrariety between the Papal Lawes, and those of Christ, wou'd carry me beyond the bounds of this Discourse, I shall only single out a few Instances for the illustration of it that are obvious to every Man's unbiass'd Understanding.

How contrary that Papal Law that requires our religious Worship of Images is to the second Commandment of the Decalogue; and that which enjoins our religious Invocation of Angels and Saints is to that Law of Christ; Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve, I have consider'd on a former Occasion, and shown how vain the Excuses are whereby they wou'd palliate the open Violation of these divine Commands.

'Tis a Law of Christ, that all Things in his Church shou'd be done to Edification. And this general Rule is apply'd particularly by the inspir'd Apostle Paul to the celebration of publick Worship, that it shou'd be perform'd in a Language known to those that are to join in it. What can be more plain to this Purpose than the Words of that Apostle, If I pray in an unknown Tongue, my Spirit prayeth, but my Understanding is unfruitful (i. e. as to the spiritual Benefit of those that shou'd join with me.) What is it then? I will pray with the Spirit (i. e. in the Exercise of that extraordinary Gift of Tongues) And I will pray with the Understanding also (i. e. in a Language that those who shou'd join with me understand.) I will sing with the Spirit, I will sing with the Understanding also. Else when thou shalt bless with the Spirit, how shall he that occupieth the

Room of the Unlearned, say Amen at thy giving of Thanks, seeing he understandeth not what thou sayest. For thou verily givest Thanks well, but the other is not edified. 1 Cor. xiv. 14, 15, 16, &c.

But how evidently is the Papal Law the reverse of this, that has for so many Centuries confin'd their publick Devotion to the Latin Tongue, which to the generality of the Worshipers is an unknown one! How shall the Unlearned among them say Amen to Prayers or Praises which they understand not! How shall they be edified (i. e. made wiser or better) by Lessons out of the Holy Scriptures read in a Language they are ignorant of! May not the common Sense of Mankind in so plain a Case as this, convince them of the Wisdom and Reasonableness of this Law of Christ, and the palpable Unreasonableness and Absurdity of this Papal Law!

Again, the Law of Christ obliges us to search the Scriptures. His Apostles were commissioned to teach all Nations whatsoever he had commanded. In pursuance of their Commission they directed their inspired Writings to the Churches they planted (including the Laity as well as what they call the Clergy,) since they were penn'd for the Instruction of all the Disciples of Christ without Distinction. And 'tis manifest from Ecclesiastical History, that the free Perusal of these sacred Writings was not only allow'd, but earnestly recommended to Christians without distinction for many successive Centuries. But how contrary to this is the rigid Restraint that the Papal Law, has laid upon the Laity of the Romish Communion from reading the Scriptures in their Mother-Tongue without a special Licence from their Bishop! A Licence which they seldom ever ask, and he as rarely grants, (or, if we may believe Pope Clement the VIIIth. is not empower'd to grant according to the known Practice of the Roman Inquisition.) And we have a late remarkable Proof of Papal Aversion to the Laities Liberty of reading the Scriptures in the Bull call'd Unigenitus, that has condemn'd those Propositions in Father Queffnell's Book that assert the Right and Obligation of all Christians to read and peruse them, as Heretical ones. And with what Vigour the Acceptance of this Bull has been inforc'd upon the Bishops and Clergy in France thro' the ascendant that Papal Authority still retains there, is sufficiently known. And to this excessive care of the Roman Pontiffs to lock up this Key of Knowledge from the People we must ascribe that general prodigious Ignorance, that implicit Faith, and that blind Submission to Papal Decrees, that has so long visibly reigned among the deluded Profelytes of the Romish Church, and no where more than where the Romish Inquisition is kept up.

'Tis another Law of Christ in reference to the celebration of that Institution, whereby we are requir'd to shew forth his Death till he come, that all shou'd drink of the Cup, as well as eat of the Bread: But the Papal Law has forbid the former to the Laity, with a Non-obstante to our Saviour's expresse Command, and to what themselves confess to have been the universal Practice of the Christian Church for several Ages.

That papal Law that has forbidden Marriage to all Priests, whether they have the Gift of Continency or not, is manifestly contrary to that Law of Christ that requires all that cannot contain to marry, and declares Marriage to be honourable in all, and the Bed undefiled. 1 Cor. vii. 9. Heb. xiii. 4. 'Tis true, one of Christ's pretended Vicars tells us, that Continency is fastned to the Bones of all Priests. But he was wofully mistaken if by Continency he means Chastity. The general Complaints in most parts of Europe ever since this Papal Law obtain'd, of the Prevalency of the contrary Vice among the Romish Clergy, does sufficiently evidence the wretched and scandalous Effects of this Papal Prohibition; and every way justify that wise Remark of Aeneas Sylvius before he

has made Pope, that the Church had for certain Reasons forbid Marriage to all Priests, but for much better Reasons it ought to be allow'd to them.

I shall only mention one Law of Christ more. And that is a most important One, viz. His new Law of Love among his Disciples. That Law which he has inforc'd by his own Example, and the Observance whereof he has made the distinguishing Badge of his Disciples. And this shou'd extend to all that in the Judgment of rational Charity believe in him, and obey him.

But how contrary to this is the papal Law that has most uncharitably confin'd the Catholick Church to those of their own Communion, and thunder'd out such rash Anathema's against all that are not subject to their Authority, declaring them incapable of Salvation! If the Gospel be true, an unfeigned Faith in the Son of God, producing a Superlative Love to him, and a sincere Obedience to his Commands, will certainly be accepted and rewarded by him. And this ought to recommend all those in whom there is a credible Appearance of it to our Esteem and Christian Love. But this Law of Catholick Love the Trent-Council has as far as in them lies revers'd by denying Salvation to all that refuse to obey the Bishop of Rome, as the Vicar of Christ. How shocking, how detestable should this damnatory Sentence against the far greatest part of the Christian World, appear to every one that has the Spirit of Catholick Charity in him!

But if this Law of Love be so grossly contradicted by this rash and truly Schismatical Doctrine, how much more notoriously is it violated by these pretended Vicars of Christ, in not only condemning all that disown their Authority as damnable Hereticks, but in endeavouring their temporal Destruction, as far as their Power can reach! How contrary do we find the mercifull Spirit of our Blessed Saviour, to be to the Spirit and Temper of his pretended Vice-gerents! He sharply rebuked his Disciples, when they were for calling for Fire from Heaven to consume those inhospitable Samaritans, that refused to receive himself, telling them, that he came not to destroy the Lives of Men, but to Save them. But his pretended Vicars have been of a quite different Mind. They have for several past Ages kindled Flames on Earth, to consume all that they were pleased to brand with the odious Name of Hereticks, i. e. All that were not Subject to their falsely pretended Authority, and imperious Dictates and Decisions. Against such they have been continually instigating Secular Princes to enact Sanguinary Laws for their utter Extermination, and even threatned such Princes with Excommunication and Deposition, if they proved Negligent and Slack in the Execution of them. For the Extirpation of such pretended Hereticks they have recommended all Methods of Violence and Force, and incited Princes (to use the Language of Pope Leo the 10th.) to Persecute them with Fire and Sword. They have applauded such perfidious Massacres, as that of Paris, and even that inhuman one in Ireland, that in a time of profound Peace, turned this Kingdom into a Field of Blood. And to add no more, the late Methods of Lewis the 14th. against the Protestants of that Kingdom, (by first employing Missionary Dragoons to compel them by all manner of barbarous Usage, to Renounce the Reformed Religion, and then infamously revoking the Edict of Nantz in open Violation of the publick Faith) were celebrated by one of the best of their Popes as worthy of Immortal Praises. And we know that, that Merciless Tribunal of the Inquisition which has destroyed such vast Numbers of pretended Hereticks, is still kept up in Spain, Portugal, and most Parts of Italy, and would be so in other Popish Dominions, if the Roman Pontiffs could with safety to their own Interest attempt it. And can we think such prodigal Destroyers of the innocent Sheep, and righteous Ser-

vants of Christ, (for such those they called Hereticks really were) to be Constituted the Vicars of the Compassionate Shepherd, and Bishop of Souls? Can we own that Apostate Church, to be the true Mother and Mistress of all Churches, that carries such a near Resemblance to Babylon the Great, not only in her gaudy Pomp, and immense Wealth, but in her being the Mother of Harlots (or Fornications) and Abominations of the Earth (by reviving Pagan Idolatry and Superstition under a Christian Name) but especially in Her being Drunk with the Blood of the Saints and Martyrs of Jesus. For in her Skirts will the Blood of some Millions of such be found, when a righteous God comes to make Inquisition for it. 'Tis very Observable, that what was represented to St. John in this prophetick Vision so astonished him, that he tells us, that when he saw her, he wondered with great Admiration. For which there was no great Occasion, if he spoke of Rome Pagan; but very great and just Occasion, if Rome Papal be designed (See xvii. Rev. 4, 5, 6. Compared with the 18th.)

This open Contradiction of the Papal Laws to those of Christ, can be defended by no other Principles than such monstrous Maxims as have long been in Vogue in the Court of Rome, viz. that the Pope has Power to make new Laws, that all Laws both Divine as well as Human are lodged in the Cabinet of his Breast, that he has a Power of dispensing with them at his Pleasure, &c. But sure such Maxims should appear justly Detestable to all that Reverence the Authority of the Son of God. For they plainly make the Authority of his pretended Vicars superiour to his own.

Having thus shewn the palpable Absurdity and Blaspheinous Pride of this Papal Claim, I shall close with a few practical Reflections on what has been offered to your Consideration.

I. We may hence see, wherein the true Unity of the Catholick (or Universal) Church consists.

'Tis one Body by its Union and Subjection to Christ, as its only Universal Head and Lord. So that whoever are United to him by an unfeigned Belief of the Essential Truths of his Gospel, and a sincere Obedience to his Commands, and a lively Hope in his promised Rewards, are the living Members of that Mystical Body, of which he is the Head. And whoever make a credible Profession of this, are to be regarded and treated by us as the Members of his Catholick Church, as measured by the Judgment of rational Charity. And those give us but a false Notion of the Catholick Church, who would set up any Human Head on the Earth as the Centre of Unity to it. And this Unity is very Consistent with some different Sentiments and Practices in Matters that affect not the Vitals of the Christian Religion. In these there may be some Diversity and Disagreement, arising from the different Degrees of Light and Knowledge, among such as are United in all the Essentials of Faith, and Holiness, and Heavenly Hope. And all that are thus United to Christ enjoy that real Communion of Saints, which consists in the Participation of the same Spiritual Blessings of his Kingdom here, and their having a right to the glorious Eternal Rewards of it.

II. We may hence see the due Measure and Extent of our Christian Charity.

We must extend it to all those who in the Judgment of rational Charity agree with us in the Essentials of Christian Faith and Holiness, and Heavenly Hope, notwithstanding such Differences as are unavoidable among Sincere and upright Christians in this State of Imperfection, where the best know but in part; there may be different External Communions (usually occasioned by imposing unscriptural, and unnecessary, and too often ensnaring and

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Sinfull Terms of it) where there yet ought to be no real Alienation of mutual Affection and Love. Our Love should have the same Extent with that Apostolical Blessing already mentioned, (vi. Eph. 24.) It must reach to all concerning whom we have reason to believe and Hope; that they Love our Lord Jesus in Sincerity.

III. If our Blessed Saviour be the Head of his Church, and Head over all Things to it, let us ascribe to him the Glory of this Incommunicable Authority in Opposition to all that would Usurp it, and pay to him that practical Homage and Duty, that so glorious a Character justly Demands from us.

Let us ascribe to him the Glory of this his incommunicable Authority; in Opposition to all that would Usurp it.

I have already shewn, what Reason we have to reject the false Claim of Papal Supremacy, as a vile and pernicious Usurpation.

But I would here farther caution you against the dangerous Delusion of those, who ascribe a proper Legislative Authority over the Universal Church, to those they call general Councils. For this is as real an Usurpation of the incommunicable Right of our Blessed Saviour, to be the only Lord and Lawgiver to it.

Many talk much of the *Laws of the Catholick Church*. If by the Catholick Church they intend (as the Scriptures always do, when they speak of that Universal Church, which is the Mystical Body of which Christ is the Head) all that Believe in our Lord Jesus, and Obey him, and look for the blessed Hope; 'tis Ridiculous Non-Sense, to talk of the *Laws of this Catholick or Universal Church*. All such true Christians never met, nor indeed could since the large Diffusion of the Gospel ever meet to enact any Laws. And much less were they ever authorized by our Saviour to make any Laws for themselves, Distinct from those which his Inspired Apostles were Commissioned as his *Heralds* to publish to them.

But to avoid this palpable Absurdity, they run into another, by telling us, that those Councils which they call *Œcumenical*, or *general Ones*, are the *Catholick-Church-Representative*. And accordingly we may Observe, that the usual Preface of such Councils runs in this Strain, the *Holy Œcumenical Synod congregated* [in such or such a Place] in the Holy Spirit, *representing the Universal Church* &c. And this they think warrants them in Styling their *Decisions* and *Canons*, the *Laws of the Catholick Church*. So that this Scheme sets up an *Aristocracy*, instead of *Monarchy* in the Christian Church; and instead of one Head of it, as *Christ's Vice-gerent*, assigns as many *Heads* as there are Members that have a decisive Vote in such Councils. And this is what some have called *French Popery*, and is in its just Consequences subversive of the Papal Claim.

And 'tis the more needful to examine this Scheme, because it has been warmly espoused by those who have been fond of Projects of Reunion between the Protestant Churches and those of the Romish Communion. And some Protestants as well as Popish Writers have given much into such Projects from a pretended Zeal for the Unity and Peace of the Catholick Church. But as those Projects are utterly impracticable, unless the Roman Pontiffs renounce their usurped Supremacy, and those of the Romish Hierarchy that adhere to them, discard those corrupt *Doctrines* and *Practices* which their former Councils and especially their last at *Trent* have imposed under the false Notion of the *Catholick Faith*; So the Notion it self of such Councils *representing the Universal Church* is most unreasonable and absur'd. Those Synods which had the fairest pretence to be called *General Ones*, were called together by the *Roman Emperors* whose Mandates could not reach to those

Churches that were not within the Bounds of it; And since the *Popes* have assumed to themselves the sole Right of calling them, a great part of the Christian World had none at all to represent them.

But let us examine this Notion of a *Church Representative*, And the Absurdity of it will appear. In the first Councils called *General*, Did all Christians in every part of the vast Roman Empire from whence Bishops were sent, meet to choose them as their Representatives, and promise Submission to whatever Decisions or Decrees they should make? Or, could they represent them without their own Choice and Consent? Even in Civil Government can any be a Representative of a County or City or other Town Corporate without their Election and Consent?

But the Truth is, That in Matters that wholly depend on Divine Revelation, and are already fixed by it, No Man either can or ought to depute any other to be his *Representative*. All Christians can no more be represented by what they call a *General Council* than they can be represented by them at the Day of final Judgment. All Christians without Distinction are obliged to *search the Scriptures*, and to *believe* what is taught, and *obey* what is commanded there, as far as they can in the diligent and impartial use of the best Means and Helps they are furnished with, discern the *Mind and Will* of Christ, and are accountable to him the great *searcher of Hearts* for their Sincerity herein. And they are no way obliged to put out their own Eyes, that they may see with those of other Men. Their Faith and Obedience is no otherwise acceptable, than as it is the Product of their own Conviction concerning the *Truths and Duties* of the Christian Religion upon the best Evidence laid before them; Not of an implicit Faith in the Dictates, or blind Obedience to the Injunctions of uninspired and fallible Teachers. And therefore in Matters of Religion that concern his Belief and Obedience on which his Acceptance with God and Eternal Salvation depend, no Man, can depute any other to be his *Representative*.

But let us farther consider, What such Councils called *General*, are supposed to meet for? Is it to establish *new Doctrines* which Christ never taught, or make *new Laws* for all Christians that he never prescribed? This were to make their Commission much larger than that of the Apostles themselves, who were never authorized to *teach the Observance of any things but what Christ had commanded them*; Who delivered nothing to the Churches but what they had received from the Lord; Who disclaimed any *Dominion over their Faith* by any Dictates of their own. This were to alter the *Term of Salvation* which the Gospel contains, which we may be sure the true Head and Lawgiver and final Judge of his Subjects never gave any Men a Commission to do.

Or, do such Councils only meet to explain the *Doctrines and Laws* of Christ, and to instruct all Christians in the true Sense of what he has revealed and prescribed in his Gospel?

Here the known Question returns, are all Christians obliged to take their *Explanations* of the Mind and Will of Christ for *Authentick*, and *obligatory on their Consciences* without any Examination, or any convincing Evidence that they are right? If indeed such Councils could lay before the Christian World such Evidence that their Explications are Genuine and *Authentick* as will convince all sincere Enquirers into the Mind and Will of Christ, All such will receive them, not on the account of their Authority, but of the Evidence they produce, and consequently on the Authority of Christ himself. Such Councils would act herein as good Teachers and faithful Guides, but not as Lords over our Faith or Practice, or by any proper Legislative Authority he has vested them with. But if they pretend, That all Christians are obliged to believe and obey whatever they decide or decree whether they can discern any Evidence themselves, That their

Decisions and Decrees are the real *Doctrines* and *Laws* of Christ. They plainly usurp his sole Empire over the Consciences of his Subjects, and utterly destroy that *inalienable Right* that every Christian has to judge for himself in matters wherein his own Acceptance with God and his Eternal Salvation are concerned.

And we need no more to convince us of the gross Absurdity of this Claim than the *Contradictory Decisions and Decrees* of those Councils that styl'd themselves *Oecumenical* or *General Ones*, and *Representatives of the Universal Church*. Thus in Matters of Faith, the *Nicene* and the *Arrian* Councils have made quite opposite Decisions. And some of the Latter Councils were far more numerous. So have those *Popish Councils* directly clash'd, That on the one hand established the *Superiority* of what they called a *General Council* above the *Pope*, and those on the other hand that have asserted the *Pope's Superiority* above that of a *General Council*, and both equally pretended to represent the *Universal Church*. And can all that are Members of the *Romish Church* be obliged to receive such inconsistent Decisions? Thus in matters of *Practice*, One called a *General Council* condemned the *Worship of Images* as contrary to the *Laws of Christ*; Another in the same Age required the paying a religious Veneration to them. And how should all Christians through the World be obliged to obey such *contrary Decrees*? And both enforced with *Anathema's* against all Opposers?

And how contrary the Decrees of many Papal Councils are to the plain Command of Christ I have already had Occasion to Observe. And we are sure he never authorized any such *Assemblies* to reverse or alter his own *Laws*.

Let us then own no other Head of his Church but the Incarnate Son of God, the only Lord and Law-giver of it.

But,

2. 'Tis not sufficient that in point of Speculation, We own our Blessed Saviour to be the *only Head of his Church*, and *Head over all Things to it*, and that we reject the blasphemous Pretensions of those that would usurp his incommunicable Rights, We must also *practically* pay him that *Homage* and *Duty* that this glorious *Character* demands and calls for.

We must unfeignedly believe his heavenly Doctrine. We must credit and most thankfully imbrace his exceeding great and precious Promises. We must yield a cordial Subjection to his rightful Authority, and a sincere Obedience to his holy Laws. We must implore and give up our selves to the Guidance of his Holy Spirit. This alone can evidence us to be the *Living Members* of that *Mystical Body* of which he is the only *Head* and *Saviour*. And if we do so, No rash *Anathema's* of *Pope's* or *Papal Councils* can ever exclude us from that *Eternal Salvation* which he will be the *Author of to all that obey him*.

And let our Belief of his being appointed *Head over all Things to his Church*, encourage our Trust in the Power and Care of his watchful Providence for the Safety and Welfare of it. And let it inable us to wait with *Faith* and *Patience* for that happy Time, when he will vindicate his own incommunicable Authority against all proud Usurpers of it, and particu-

larly against that *Man of Sin* who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or worshiped (i. e. above all Earthly Princes) So that as God, he sitteth in the Temple of God, shewing himself that he is God, (or, shewing himself as if he were a God, as some Copys read the Words) Whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of his Mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his Coming, 2 Theff. ii. 3, 4, 8.

I shall not here enter on the Debate, Whether the Apostle intend the *Papacy* by the *Man of Sin* in this Text. I shall content my self at present with this One Remark, That I know no *Sett* and *Succession* of Men, to whom these *Characters of the Man of Sin* do more evidently belong, and are more directly applicable, than to the *Roman Pontiffs* ever since they set up for being *Vicars of Christ*, and *Heads of the Universal Church*.

IV. Let us bless God, who by the Light of his Gospel has rescued us from that miserable Blindness and Slavery under which our Ancestors were so long held by *Papal Usurpation* and *Tyranny*.

We value ourselves on that *Civil Liberty* we enjoy, and so desirable a Blessing (which many other Nations are Strangers to) deserves, and claims our very thankful Acknowledgments. But we have yet greater reason to adore the distinguishing Favour of God for our *Religious Liberty*, and Freedom from the grievous Yoke of *Papal Usurpation* and *Tyranny*. A Yoke which many of our Ancestors were weary of, but in vain struggled to shake off. But the enslaving Doctrine of *Implicit Faith*, and blind Obedience is discarded; *Sanguinary Writs de Hæretico comburendo*, are no more in use. The Spirit of Persecution is restrain'd and discountenanc'd; and the just Rights of Conscience strenuously asserted and defended. *Papal Excommunications* are justly regarded as *vain Terrors*; *Foreign Jurisdiction* is *absurd*; and the *British Throne* we hope is secure from all the *Thunders of the Vatican*. And we have a *Protestant King* seated thereon, that has declared his tender Care and Concern for the *Religious* as well as *Civil Rights* of his People, and reserves to our Blessed Saviour his sole Empire and Sovereignty, in the Consciences and Hearts of the Subjects of his spiritual Kingdom. And we have a *Protestant Queen* who has freely sacrificed the Offers of *Imperial Dignity* to her steady Zeal for the *Reformed Religion*.

May we all of us prize, more, that glorious Gospel of the Son of God, whose Light we may yet enjoy, and shew our due Improvement of it by a Conversation more becoming its holy Principles and Precepts, and the glorious Hopes it should inspire us with! May the vile Attempts of open or disguised Infidels to undermine the Credit of it, tend only to the fuller Illustration of its Divine Original! And may that gracious God who has by so many Wonders of his Power and Mercy preserv'd the Light of the Reformation among us, still watch over us; to blast all the Designs of our Enemies at Home, and of *Popish Powers* Abroad to subject us again to *Papal Tyranny*, by their restless Endeavours to entail a *Popish Line* on these *Protestant Kingdoms*! Amen.

S E R M O N XXXVI.

Preach'd at *New-Rom*, at the Ordination of
the Reverend Mr. *John Leland* December
13th. 1716.

J O H N V. 35.

*He was a burning and shining Light (or Lamp;) and ye were willing for a
Season to rejoyce in his Light.*

WE have in this Discription of *John the Baptist* the genuine Characters of a faithful Teacher in the Church of God. And we have in these Hearers of *John*, of whom our Saviour speaks, a lively Emblem of too many of those that attend the Ministration of the Word of God. He sends among them burning and shining Lights. And they for a while indeed rejoyce in the Light. But all this prov'd only a transient Flash of devout Affection, that leaves no deep and lasting Impressions, and produces no saving Effects. We may therefore from this Description of *John the Baptist*, learn what we that are Teachers in the Christian Church shou'd be and do. And we may from this Account given of his Hearers, have just occasion to direct you to the due Improvement of our ministerial Labours, and to caution you against whatever wou'd render them unsuccessful and ineffectual.

Our blessed Saviour in my Context appeals to a double Testimony concerning himself, *One, on Earth;* and another more immediately from Heaven.

He had a clear Testimony from Heaven, viz. both the miraculous Works that he did (which being the manifest Effects of a divine and Almighty Power were evident Credentials of his divine Mission and of the Truth of his Doctrine) and the audible Voice from Heaven, whereby God had solemnly declared his Approbation of him as his beloved Son, in whom he was well pleased, and whom he required them to hear. See v. 36, 37.

He had also a Testimony on Earth to appeal to, viz. That of *John the Baptist*. And this Testimony the Jews were the more oblig'd to receive, because it was an allowed Maxim among them, that that Man was to be regarded as a Prophet to whom another Prophet of unquestion'd Authority bare Witness.

But then our Saviour plainly intimates to them, that he appeal'd not to *John's* Testimony as if he himself needed it. v. 34. For as he had a greater Testimony than *John's*; so he himself was greater than all other Prophets (being the incarnate Son of God, and that Prophet, by way of Eminency, that God promis'd to raise up to them from among their Brethren, whom he commanded them at their utmost peril to hear. See Deut. xviii. 15. Acts iii. 22.) But he alledges *John's* Testimony only for their Conviction, whose just Veneration for *John* might induce them to embrace his Testimony concerning that promised Mes-

siah, whose Forerunner he profess'd himself to be.

And accordingly in the Words I have read, he gives this honourable Character of *John*, and this Account of the Reception and Effects of his Ministry, *He was a burning, &c.*

He was a burning and shining Light, (or, Lamp, λυχνία)

The learned Dr. *Lightfoot* here judiciously observes, that our Saviour uses a form of Expression common among the Jews concerning their eminent Teachers. Of such a one they were wont to say, that he is a *Lamp of Light, or a Lamp of the Law*, [*Lucerna loci sui*] the *Lamp of the Place where he liv'd*. So that this Character, tho' it do not exclude *John's* being an extraordinary and inspired Prophet, yet 'tis not peculiar to him as such, but common to all such as were Teachers among them, especially those of great Eminence for their Knowledge and Piety. And is therefore applicable to all such.

But we may farther observe a remarkable Difference in what is spoken concerning our Saviour, and what is spoken concerning *John*, and all other inferior Teachers.

Concerning *Christ* we read, that he was [*τὸ εὖς*] *The Light, The* [*τὸ φῶς τὸ ἀληθινόν*] *true Light that lighteth every Man that cometh into the World.* John i. 7, 9. The *Light* not only of his People *Israel*, but of the *Gentiles* also. The *Light of the World*, (as he styles himself, *John* viii. 12.) In him all the *Treasures of Wisdom and Knowledge* were hid, Col. ii. 2. From his Spirit all the *Prophets* that liv'd before his Incarnation, deriv'd all that supernatural Light that they communicated in such various Degrees to the Church. From him his inspir'd *Apostles* deriv'd their clearer Knowledge of the *Mysteries* of his Kingdom; and much more are all ordinary Teachers in his Church indebted to the ordinary Illumination of his Spirit for those eminent Measures of divine Knowledge, which they have receiv'd, in order to the imparting it to others by their ministerial Instructions.

But concerning *John the Baptist*, our Saviour here tells us, he was a *Lamp*. The *Apostle John* had told us concerning *John the Baptist*, that he was not that *Light* (by way of Eminency) but came only to bear Witness of it, *John* i. 8. He was but a *Lamp* that deriv'd all his Light and Knowledge from the *true Light of the World*. And much more may we say of all ordinary Teachers in the Christian Church, that they

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are but *Lamps*, that borrow their divine Knowledge from this glorious intellectual Light as the Fountain of it. And therefore they are elsewhere call'd *Stars in the right Hand of Christ*, plac'd in the Churches as so many *Lamps in the Candlesticks*; but who like the *Planets* shine only with a borrowed Light, deriv'd from him who is the Sun of Righteousness, the Original and extensive Light of the intellectual World, and the source of this divine Light to all that partake of it. In him alone there is a fullness of Light. All other Teachers have only such Measures and Degrees of it, as he thinks fit to impart to them. And as this shou'd render even the most knowing and judicious Teachers humble, (for what reason have we to be proud of our borrow'd Light?) So it shou'd teach us to depend on divine Illumination (tho' in the diligent use of all proper Means, such as Reading and Meditation, &c.) for those eminent Degrees of divine Knowledge and Wisdom, that may render us burning and shining Lamps in our Place and Day.

And ye were willing for a Season to rejoyce in his Light.

Some here have supposed, that our Blessed Saviour alludes to the Custom of burning Lamps in the Night-time, till the Light of the Sun appear'd. And therefore thus paraphrase the Words. Ye were willing to rejoyce in the Ministry of *John* while it continued; and since that was only to continue till the Day dawn'd, and the Sun of Righteousness arose; and since *John* was only my Forerunner to prepare the way to me, you ought on his Testimony to receive me as the promis'd Messiah, and that true Light of the World that he came to bear Witness to.

But I choose rather to follow the more common and obvious Exposition of the Words, which supposes our Blessed Saviour here to upbraid the *Jews* with their Inconstancy, who having for a while rejoyc'd in the Light of *John's* Ministry, and express'd an affectionate Veneration for him as a true Prophet, had now begun to forsake and reject him, since he had given a publick Testimony to our Lord as the promis'd Messiah. So that their former forward Zeal and Esteem for his Ministry was now cool'd and turn'd into Contempt and Aversion. And accordingly we may see how he was reproach'd and vilify'd by them, *Luke vii. 33.* and ill-treated, *Mat. xvii. 12, 13.*

Now from the Words as thus explained, we may observe for our present Instruction.

I. 'Tis a genuine Character of every able and faithful Teacher in the Church of God, that he is a burning and shining Light.

II. The Ministry of such is often attended for a while, with some seeming Joy and Affection by those on whom it produces no saving Effects.

Under the former of these Observations, I shall have occasion to address myself more particularly to my Reverend Brethren; and under the Latter, to those that sit under our Ministry, and particularly to those of this Christian Society. And may we all of us diligently attend to what my Text suggests for our Instruction and Direction in our several respective Duties.

I. 'Tis a genuine Character of every able and faithful Teacher in the Church of God, that he is a burning and a shining Lamp.

For since there is nothing in this Character here given of *John*, but what other Passages of Scripture suppose to be found in all ordinary Teachers in the Christian Church to qualify them for their sacred Office and Function, we may justly apply it to all of them.

Now in this Character we may observe,

First, The Office and Use of such faithful Teachers in general, they are designed to be as Lamps in the Church of God.

Secondly, The internal Qualifications requisite for the due Discharge of it, they are to be burning and shining Lamps.

Thirdly, The due Exercise of those Qualifications in the several Duties of their holy Office and Function.

First, In this Character of faithful Teachers, we may observe their Office and Use in general, they are designed to be as Lamps in the Church of God.

Now we know the use of a Lamp is to give Light and Direction to all that are round about it. So are all faithful Teachers to be as so many Lamps, in the Church, the House of God, to instruct and guide all that are under their Inspection and Care in the Ways of Truth and Holiness that lead to eternal Life.

And as their being styl'd Lamps, does imply, that they shine only with a borrow'd Light; so it may farther imply, that their Authority is only Ministerial and Directive, such as belongs to Teachers and Guides, not Dictatorial and Legislative. Ordinary Teachers have no Dominion over the Faith of their People; who are under no Obligation to receive with a blind Submission whatever they deliver to them; but on the contrary have a just Right in imitation of the noble *Bereans* to compare their Doctrine with that of the Holy Scriptures, *Acts xvii. 11.* and are only so far bound to receive their Message, as they find it conformable to their Instructions in the written Word of God. Much less have they any Power to impose their own arbitrary Laws upon those under their pastoral Conduct. All they have in their Commission is to teach what Christ has commanded, *Mat. xxviii. ult.* and to see his Laws relating to the Worship, the Discipline and Order of his Church put in Execution. So that their Power of Ruling in the Church is wholly subservient to that of Teaching, which is the most excellent and valuable part of their Office. To labour in Word and Doctrine being a more honourable Branch of their Function than to rule well, *1 Tim. v. 17.* And therefore, these seem to have very different Apprehensions from what the new Testament Writers suggest, who allow indeed an Authority to teach and to dispense the Sacraments to all the Ministers of the Gospel, but reserve what they call the Power of Jurisdiction to a superior Order, and appropriate it thereto. Whereas the Gospel supposes all that are authoriz'd to teach and feed their Flocks, by the same Commission, equally authoriz'd to guide and rule them; and supposes the Latter to be a lower part of their Office, and wholly subordinate to the Former. For since Christian Pastors are furnish'd with no coercive Power; since they are not to rule by Constraint and Force, since they rule only by the Word, not by the Sword; since their Power of Binding and Loosing (by pronouncing things lawful or unlawful) and of remitting or retaining Sins (by publishing and applying to the Consciences of Men, the Promises of the Gospel to the truly penitent) is only declarative not judicial. It evidently follows, that to whom the Ministry of the Word is committed, to them the Power also of spiritual Guidance and rule over those whom they teach, is intrusted. And what indeed are their Admonitions and Reproofs, but particular ways of Instruction? Nay, what are their highest Censures, but an Application of the Threatnings of the Gospel, to the Consciences of particular obstinate and scandalous Offenders? A Declaration that their Crimes render them unworthy of Christian Communion, and an urging on others their Duty in declining the Communion of such infectious Persons? And this is but one Branch of pastoral Teaching. They are to rule by no other Force than the Evidence of divine Light, urg'd with the persuasive Charms of divine Love. Their Office is a Ministry not a Domination.

Secondly,

Secondly, We may in this Character observe the internal Qualifications requisite in such as are Teachers in the Church of God. They must be Burning and Shining Lamps.

Now this may include such Qualifications as these.

I. An Eminency in divine Knowledge and Wisdom.

They must in this Sense be shining Lights or Lamps, by having their Minds abundantly stock'd with divine Truths, and enrich'd with the Pleasures of Heavenly Wisdom. They are elsewhere compar'd to Stars, which Christ is said to hold in his Right Hand (1 Rev. ult.) to import, That there must be a plentiful affluence of Heavenly Light in their own Understandings, in order to their diffusing it to all that are within their particular Orb. They must be Scribes well instructed for the Kingdom of God that are able out of the rich Treasury and Fund (that the divine Blessing on their painful Studies and Disquisitions has furnish'd them with) to bring forth Things New and Old (suited to the various Cases and Exigencies of such as they minister to.) Otherwise, tho' they may bear the Name of Teachers, they want what is absolutely needful to answer their Character, and discharge the Duties of their Function. An ignorant Teacher is but a dark Lanthorn. A Well without Water, and a Cloud without Rain. How should those dispense the Mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven to others that are in a great Measure uninstructed in them themselves! Ministers of all Men had need to be skillful in that Word of Righteousness, which they are obliged as Work-men that need not be ashamed, to divide aright, and to give every one their Portion in due Season. 2 Tim. xi. 15. They are call'd Angels, and must in this resemble them, in their often beholding the Face of their Heavenly Father, in their standing much in the Councils of God, and having a deep insight into his revealed Mind and Will, into which they should like those inquisitive Heavenly Spirits daily and diligently pry. Under the Gospel as well as under the Law, the Priests Lips should preserve Knowledge, that their People may seek Law at his Mouth, Mal. 2. 7. And 'tis a deplorable Case with a People, when their very Teachers cause them to err, When the Blind rashly undertake to lead the Blind, and both are in danger of falling into the Ditch, Math. 15. 14.

But this Character farther implies,

II. An Eminency in Holiness

We may observe, That when the Apostle John would describe to us the spotless Purity of the divine Nature, he saith, God is Light, and in him is no Darkness at all + (There is a perfect invariable Rectitude in his Will and Actions correspondent to the unerring Knowledge of his all-comprehending Mind.) And to walk in the Light, is an Expression used by the same inspired Writer to import Holiness of Conversation, As to walk in Darkness, imports an ungodly and vicious course of Life. See v. 6, 7. Christian Pastors are then burning and Shining Lamps, when that Light of divine Knowledge that shines in their Minds powerfully warms and purifies their Hearts, influences and directs their Actions, and derives a Lustre of Holiness upon their whole Conversation. Since the use of these sacred Lamps is to guide others in the Ways of Truth and Godliness by their Practice as well as their Doctrine, Those had need to be remarkably holy in all manner of Conversation, who are to be Examples to; as well as Teachers of the Flock whom they take the oversight of. And therefore when the Apostle Paul so largely recounts the particular Characters and Qualifications of a Christian Bishop, We may observe that the greatest part of them relate to the Purity of his

Manners, and the regularity of his Behaviour and Deportment. See 1 Tim. iii. 2, 3, &c. 1 Tit. 6, 7, 8, &c. Priests under the Mosaic Law were to be free from any remarkable natural Blemish; And much more should those under the Gospel be free from all gross Stains of Moral Impurity. And as the Priests under the Law were to put on their holy Vestments, when they were to officiate in the Sanctuary, to remind them that God would be Sanctified in those that drew so near to him; so we may well imagine, that God does as truly expect from those that minister at his Gospel-altar that blameless Innocence and Purity of Life, of which the Holy Vestments were only a Type and Figure. When the Flocks of God see those Graces and Vertues which their Teachers recommend, brightly exemplify'd in their own Lives; This adds a great Weight and Authority to their Instructions. They must shew forth the Word of Life which they publish to others, in it's admirable transforming Efficacy on their own Hearts and Lives. They must not only be Pillars of Truth in the House of God; but Ornaments to it, by such a shining and exemplary Conversation as may conciliate a Reverence in the Minds of others both to their Christian and their Ministerial Profession. Scandalous Spots would but bring all their Light under a dark Eclipse, and render them like those wandering Stars (St. Jude speaks of) for whom the blackness of Darkness is reserved forever. v. 13.

But this Character of Burning and Shining Lamps, seems farther to imply.

III. An Eminency in Zeal for the Glory of God, and the Salvation of Men.

Christian Teachers are to be Burning as well as Shining Lamps. They have the valuable Interests of the Kingdom of God intrusted in their Hands; They have the precious Souls of Men committed to their Care; And therefore a most ardent Desire to glorify God in promoting the Salvation of Souls, should be the reigning Affection of their's. And indeed that Light of divine Knowledge that Shines in their Minds, has a tendency to kindle the Flames of Divine Love in their Hearts. And 'tis that noble, that active Principle that must inspire all their Ministerial Labours with Life and Vigour. 'Tis the use of these sacred Lamps to diffuse Warmth and Motion as well as Light to others, in order whereto they must themselves largely partake of holy Life and Heat as well as Knowledge and Light. 'Tis observ'd, That the Name of Seraphim given to the Holy Angels implies their being inflam'd with divine Love, And with the like ardent Zeal should those Angels of the Churches be fill'd, who are employ'd in the like Service with them, of Ministering to the Heirs of Salvation. Such an eminent Degree of holy Zeal is highly necessary to sweeten all the unwearied Toyls and Labours of their Ministerial Work, and to carry them through all the difficulties and Discouragements of it, and to invigorate all their Endeavours for advancing the Interests of the Redeemer's Kingdom, for bringing more Subjects into it, and for assisting those that are brought in, in their preparation for the Kingdom of Glory. They will soon languish and tyre in so difficult and laborious an Attempt, unless they are continually animated by this divine Principle. 'Tis this alone can prompt them chearfully to spend and be spent in this excellent, but painful Service. 2 Cor. xii. 15. 'Tis this must adapt all their sacred Ministrations to the great and valuable End thereof, and enable them to speak from the Heart to the Heart, and to kindle the same Flames of Divine Love in the Souls of others which they feel in their own. 'Tis this holy Zeal must prompt them to feed the Sheep, and the Lambs of Christ, with that ardent Affection and tender Compassion, which a superlative Love to the great Shephard

Shepherd and Bishop of Souls should inspire all inferior Pastors with. Without the fervour of this divine Zeal, they will at best only shine as Stars in a Winter-night that may give some Light, but convey no Heat and Warmth to those that behold them.

I proceed now,

Thirdly, to consider the Exercise of these excellent Qualifications in the several Dutys of their holy Office and Function of Teachers in the Church of God.

'Tis the Use of Lamps to convey Light and Heat to others. And these sacred Lamps are therefore furnished with such an Eminency of Light and Knowledge, of Grace and Holiness, and of divine Zeal, not merely for their own Use and Benefit, but for the Service of the House of God; and in order to diffuse their salutary Influence to those they minister to.

They are furnished with such large Measures of divine Knowledge and Wisdom, that they may communicate it to others by their assiduous and laborious Instructions. This rich Treasure is put into these chosen Vessels, that they may liberally convey it to those ignorant Souls that greatly need it. 'Tis therefore their Principal Work to manifest and diffuse the quickning Savour of divine Knowledge to others. To spread that saving Light to such as sit in darkness, and thereby to rescue them from their natural Ignorance and Blindness, and to recover them from their pernicious Errors to the belief and acknowledgment of divine Truth, and by sound Doctrine, to convince Gainsayers. 1 Tit. 9. They must be Pillars of Truth, erected not only for the Propagation, but for the necessary Defence of it, and therefore must contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints. 'Tis for this End, they are required, to preach the Word, To be instant in Season and out of Season, to reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine. 2 Tim. iv. 2. They must be apt to teach (dextrous and experienced in the divine Art of instructing others) patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves, if peradventure God will give them Repentance to the acknowledgment of the Truth, &c. 2 Tim. ii. 24, 25. They must feed the Lambs, as well as Sheep, of Christ, providing Milk for Babes, as well as Strong Meat for those that are more skillful in the Word of Righteousness &c. Hebr. v. 12, 13, 14. They must adapt their divine Instructions as much as possible to the different capacity of their Hearers. They must keep back nothing that is profitable for them, but must with all faithfulness and diligence, both by publick and private Instructions, deliver to them the whole Counsel of God, and thereby keep themselves pure from the Blood of all. Acts xx. 20, 26, 27.

Their Eminency in Holiness must enable them to recommend the practice of serious Religion by their Example as well as their Doctrine. They must hereby convince their Hearers that they lay down no impracticable Rules of Piety and Goodness, and would not bind any Burdens upon them, but what divine Grace has rendered easy, and light to themselves. They must hereby represent Christianity to them in it's winning and amiable Lustre, in all it's excellent and beneficial Fruits, so proper to attract the Esteem and Veneration of all that behold them. They must not only point out to them the holy Ways of God, but go before them therein, and be able to bespeak their Flocks in the Language of the Apostle Paul, Be ye Followers of me, as I am also of Christ. 1 Cor. xi. 1. When they charge others to walk worthy of God, who has called them to his Kingdom and Glory, they must be able to appeal to themselves that they give them no other Advice but what themselves have taken, Ye are Witnesses and God also, how holily, how justly and unblameably we behaved our selves among you that believed. 1 Thess. xi. 10, 11, 12. Their Example must be directive, as well as their Doctrine in-

Their Eminency in divine Zeal must appear in all their sacred Ministrations.

The warm Sense they have of the great Things of Religion upon their own Hearts must enable them to speak of them with energy and Life to others. What they feel of these important Matters themselves must prompt them to discourse concerning them, in that serious and affecting Strain, that is most like to reach the Consciencies, and touch the Hearts, and raise the Affections of others. They must as knowing the Terrors of the Lord, earnestly persuade Men to flee from the Wrath to come; They must recommend the Gospel-Salvation to their acceptance, as Men deeply sensible of the absolute Necessity and invaluable Worth of it. They must endeavour to kindle the same ardours of Affection to their God and Saviour in the Souls of others, which flame out in their own. Their Zeal for the Glory of God must make them ambitious of being instrumental to enlarge his Kingdom; by turning Men from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. It must render them importunate in their Intreaties and Pleadings with Sinners, in order to the promoting a mutual Reconciliation between God and them. Their Zeal for the Honour and Interest of their Blessed Redeemer, must furnish them with the most persuasive Arguments to draw Men to him. They must as Friends to this Bride-Groom of Souls, set him forth in all his inviting and attractive Excellencies, that they may gain some Hearts to him, and espouse them as a chaste Virgin to him. Their tender compassion to perishing Souls, must make them long for them in the Bowels of Christ, and travel in Birth over them, till they see him formed in their Hearts. They must with an holy Vehemency pluck Sinners as Brands out of the Fire; They must by the force of the most moving Intreaties, the most winning Expostulations, the most earnest Sollicitations, compel them to come in, and accept the rich Offers of that Nuptial heavenly Feast that is provided for them. Luke xiv. 23.

And this divine Zeal must excite them to fulfill their Ministry in all the several Branches of it. Not only by Teaching their Flocks, but by administering all the Ordinances of divine Worship among them, by the faithful Exercise of sacred Discipline for preserving the Purity of those Churches which they have the Pastoral oversight of. By Watching over their Souls, as those that must give an Account of them, by private as well as publick Admonitions. And divine Zeal should inspire every part of their Pastoral Work with an holy Vivacity and Vigour. It should effectually prevent their being slight and perfunctory in their Ministerial Duty. It should make them intent and earnest in prosecuting and attaining the great Ends of their Function, and deeply solicitous about the efficacy and success of their sacred Ministrations. So far as they are acted by this divine Principle, Their Hearts will be in every part of their Works [The happy Success of their Ministry will be their greatest Delight and Joy; and the unfruitfulness of it, the Matter of their bitterest Complaint and Grief.] These sacred Lamps, when inspired with this divine Zeal, will not grudge the consuming this Lamp of Life in painful Studies and Labours, if they may but be serviceable to convey that divine Light and Warmth to the Souls of others, which their own are animated with. [They will give themselves wholly to their Ministerial Work, 1 Tim. iv. 15. and pursue it with the intensest Application of all their spiritual Powers, that they may not run and Labour in vain.]

Having thus explained this Character of all able and faithful Teachers in the Church of God, That they are burning and shining Lamps, I proceed to speak something briefly to the,

II. Observation from the Words, viz.

That the Ministry of such burning and shining Lamps is often for a while attended upon with seem-

ing Affection and Joy, by those on whom it produces no saving Effects.

The Truth of this Observation was eminently verified in *John the Baptist*, of whom our Saviour gives this excellent Character.

We may in the History of the Gospel observe, That at the beginning of his Ministry, He was generally esteemed and revered as a Prophet, and an Eminent Teacher. Great Multitudes from Jerusalem, and all Judea, and the Region about Jordan, attended his Ministry, and were baptized into that Doctrine he preached, *Repent, For the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*. And their Confession of their Sins, carried with it an External Declaration of that Repentance, which was so necessary to prepare them to partake of the Privileges of the Messiah's Kingdom. Even the Pharisees and Sadducees themselves came to him, as seeming Profelites to receive his Baptism. See *Matt. iii.* from v. 1. to the 8th, The like Account we have of Multitudes flocking to him, when he preached the Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins, and of the Particular Instructions he gave to the several Sorts of his Hearers, *Luke iii.* Nay we read of King Herod himself, that he disdained not to become one of his Auditors. For we are told, that Herod feared (or, revered) John, knowing that he was a just Man, and an holy, and observed him, and when he had heard him, he did many Things, and heard him gladly. *John vi.* 20.

But alas this Pang of seeming Devotion soon went off, and their Goodness was but as the Morning Cloud and early Dew. Some of the People and the Publicans indeed became his Disciples; but the Pharisees and Lawyers rejected the Counsel of God against themselves. And instead of reverencing his Character took occasion from the Austerity of his Life, to revile him as one that had a Devil, See *Luke vii.* 29, 30, &c. This mystical Elias came to them as the Fore-runner of the Messiah, but they knew (or own'd) him not, and did to him whatever they listed, *Matt. xvii.* 12, 13. Even Herod's Veneration for him, prevented not his imprisoning him for his faithful Reproof on the Account of his incestuous Commerce with *Herodias*, nor his sacrificing his Life itself to her Malice and Revenge. In a Word, tho' John's Ministry was for a while entertain'd with seeming Affection and Delight; yet the Effects of it on the most of his Hearers were not durable, nor was the Success of it considerable, or any way answerable to what might have been reasonably expected from the influence of so burning and shining a Lamp. Few were savingly enlightened and sanctify'd by it.

And that the Ministry of those Pastors and Teachers whom our Lord sets in his Church, is like to prove thus unsuccessful, as to many of those that attend upon it, we may learn from that Parable of the Sower of the Seed. Some of their Hearers are compar'd to the High-way side, on whom the Word they dispense thro' their wilful Ignorance or Non-attention, makes no Impression at all. Others are compar'd to the stony Ground, on whom it makes only a slight and superficial Impression; they do indeed receive it with joy, they embrace it with a temporary, but ineffectual Faith. But it is not rooted in their Hearts, and in time of Temptation they fall away. Others are compar'd to the Thorny Ground, in whom all the slight Fruits the Word produces, are choak'd with the Love of Riches, and with the Cares and Pleasures of this Life. Some indeed, (but alas! too few in comparison) are like the good Ground, such as in an honest and good Heart, having heard the Word, keep it; and bring forth Fruit with patience, see *Luke viii.* 11, 12, &c.

And alas the sad Experience and the mournful Complaints of the most eminent Teachers in every Age, does so fully confirm the Truth of this Observation, that I need not insist longer on the Proof of it.

And what might have been suggested to account for it will fall in as properly in the Application.

Is it the genuine Character of every able and faithful Teacher, That he is a burning and shining Lamp? Is the Ministry of such often attended upon with a seeming Joy by such on whom it makes no saving Impressions?

Then,

I. We may hence see, of how much greater Importance it is, what the Qualifications of a Teacher in the Church are, then by whom he is invested in his Office.

We do indeed freely own, That as the Character of Christ has fully describ'd the particular Qualifications of those who are to be admitted to Teach and Rule in his Church; see *Tim. i.* 3. *Tit. i.* 1. So 'tis requisite for maintaining due Order in the Christian Church, and for preventing the rash intrusion of unqualify'd Persons, that such as devote themselves to that sacred Office, should have their Qualifications try'd and approv'd by such as are already vested in that Office, and be by them solemnly set apart to it by Fasting and Prayer, and Imposition of Hands. But their Qualifications themselves are of far greater Moment and Importance than the external Solemnity and Form of their Investiture. Where those necessary Qualifications are visibly and notoriously wanting, such a Man was never truly sent by Christ: who ever may rashly lay their Hands upon him, in order to the investing him in an Office for which he is utterly unqualify'd, and incapacitated. A Man wretchedly ignorant of the Principles of the Christian Religion, nay tainted with pernicious Errors. A Man of a notoriously wicked and profligate Life, was never authoriz'd by Christ to teach and rule in his Church; nor is he capable of answering the great Ends of his Office by being a burning and shining Lamp in it. Such an one was never appointed by the chief Shepherd to be an inferior Pastor under him.

And hence we may see the gross Blindness and Partiality of a late set of Writers that call themselves Protestants, who cry up the absolute Necessity of an (I know not what) uninterrupted Line of Succession by what they call Episcopal Ordination, in order to a Man's being a Teacher in the Christian Church. And this Line of Succession they are forc'd to derive thro' the polluted Channel of the Apostate Church of Rome.

Pursuant to their Scheme, all that have had what they call Episcopal Ordination, even in the Church of Rome itself, have valid Mission. Whereas in those Reformed Churches that have not retain'd the Diocesan Form of Government, They reckon all their Ordinations invalid and null, and all their pretended Teachers, how eminent soever their Abilities and Piety, too, have been, to be no better than Lay-Intruders, never sent by Christ, nor by such as he authoriz'd and empower'd to send others to Minister in his Church.

We should not indeed wonder to hear such senseless Notions as these advanc'd by the furious Partizans of the Church of Rome. Tho' if any thing be capable to break this pretended Line of Succession, it has been most notoriously broken in that Church, even with respect to the pretended Heads of it, those Roman Bishops that pretended all Ecclesiastical Power to be derived from themselves as the Vicars of Christ. For if a Man's ascending the Papal Chair by Simony, by Magic, by Murder of his Predecessors, by the interest of Whores, If a Man's being a notorious Heretick, if his being openly abandon'd to all manner of abominable Wickedness, or if his wretched Ignorance of the Christian Faith, or his monstrous Usurpation of

of the incommunicable Rights of our Blessed Saviour; In a Word, if any Defects of Understanding in the Doctrines of the Gospel, or visible Immoralities of Life, can unqualify a Man for being a Pastor or Teacher in the Church of Christ, This pretended Line of Succession has no where more remarkably fail'd than in the Church of *Rome*, which makes the most confident Boasts of it.

But that pretended Protestants should lick up the poysonous Spittle of these Popish Writers, and throw it in the Face of so many of the most eminent Teachers that the Reformed Churches were ever blessed with, argues a strange Degree of judicial Infatuation. That they should allow the validity of the Mission of those Popish Priests, who are given up to so manifold and pernicious Delusions, who are set apart by their Ordainers to celebrate an Idolatrous Mass, who are no better then blind Guides that are likely to lead their blind Followers into the Ditch; and that they shou'd at the same time deny the validity of the Mission of all those eminent Pastors of the Reformed Churches that have not had Diocesan Ordination, tho' they have been set apart to their Office (as *Timothy* was to his) by the laying on of the Hands of the Presbytery, 1 *Tim.* iv. 14. Nay tho' they have been ordain'd by such Pastors of particular Churches as were in the stile of the three first Centuries *Bishops*, and this after a due previous Trial of their Ministerial Abilities, and unblamable Conversation. This is such a strain of Ignorance and Uncharitableness, that we may well cry out, *Tell it not in Gath, &c.* Publish it not in the Streets of *Rome*, least the Champions and Abettors of the Romish Hierarchy rejoice and triumph. And well may they do so, to see pretended Protestants thus betray the Interest and Honour of the Reformation, by casting so vile a Blot on so great a part of those glorious Instruments whom God has employ'd to advance that blessed Work. And I cannot but approve the just Censure that the Learned *Monsieur Claud*, in his Defence of the Reformation, has passed on the Patrons of these Nations in the following remarkable Words: "To speak my Thoughts freely, (saith he) it seems to me that this fierce Opinion of the absolute Necessity of Episcopacy (he intends the present Form of it) that goes so high, as to own no Church, no Call, no Ministry, no Sacraments, or Salvation in the World, where there are no Episcopal Ordinations, tho' the true Doctrine, the true Faith and Piety be there, and which would make all Religion depend on a Formality, and on such a Formality as we have shewn to be of no other than human Institution. This Opinion can be look'd upon no other than the worst Character; a piece of Pharisaism all over, that strains at a Gnat, and swallows a Camel. And I cannot avoid having at least a Contempt of these Thoughts, and Compassion of those that fill their Heads with them.

I shall only here add, that the Importance of these Qualifications, to the right Discharge of the ministerial Office, shou'd make those who invest others in it, exceeding cautions, whom they admit to it. We cannot indeed expect that all these sacred Lamps in the House of God shou'd shine with an equal Brightness. In the Churches Hemisphere, one Star may differ from another in Glory; and all are not of the same Magnitude. But some considerable Degrees of divine Light, some credible Appearance of Piety and Holiness and of divine Zeal, shou'd be found in all that are set apart to this sacred Function. Those who are themselves the publick Depositaries of divine Truth, shou'd commit that Depositum or Truth into the Hands of none, but such as they have reason in the Judgment of Charity to think faithful Men, and able to teach others, 2 *Tim.* ii. 2. The Apostle's Caution to *Timothy*, was intended for the Instruction of all Christian Pastors in this important Affair, Lay Hands suddenly on no Man, neither be thou par-

taker of other Men's Sins. Keep thyself pure, 1 *Tim.* v. 22. And those are manifestly accessory to the Sins of others, who invest such in the Office of Teachers in the Church, that are visibly destitute of the Qualifications which the Charter of *Christ* has made necessary to their Entrance upon it.

II. We may hence infer, how truly honourable the Office of Christian Teachers is, when they answer this excellent Character of being burning and shining Lamps in the House of God.

'Tis, my Brethren, too notorious to escape our Observation, that the Office of Teachers in the Church of God is too generally treated with an irreligious Scorn and Contempt in the Age wherein we live. This is indeed in part owing to the woful prevalence of a Spirit of Infidelity and Profaneness. But I wish there were no occasion to add, that 'tis in some part owing to the Ignorance, or immoral Behaviour of too many that for worldly ends aspire to this sacred Office. As to those Teachers, who give the Handle and occasion for this Contempt of their Office, by their Ignorance of the Mysteries of the Gospel they rashly undertake to instruct others in; by laying out their Ministerial Labours, rather to promote a Conformity to the arbitrary Injunctions and Canons of Men, than to the Laws of Christ; by turning the Church of Christ rather into a School of Politicks than of Divinity; or by fomenting bitter Animosities and Contentions in opposition to mutual Peace and Love: But especially for those that openly dishonour their Profession by shameful Irregularities of Life, and therefore cause those Offerings of the Lord to be abhor'd, which they touch with so unhallow'd Hands, I may justly apply the Words of our Blessed Saviour, *We to the World, because of such Offences* (or, *Scandals*). But woe to them by whom the Offences comes, *Mat.* xviii. 7. But my Brethren, to answer the Uses of a burning and shining Lamp in the Church of God; to diffuse the salutary Light of divine Knowledge in that part of the House of God, where we are plac'd by our judicious and laborious Instructions, and thereby to make many wise to Salvation; to propagate the serious Belief of the great Truths of the Gospel in the Minds of others of which we have a firm Persuasion in our own, to be instrumental to recover dead Souls to spiritual and divine Life, by the powerful Dispensation of the Word of Life; to draw others to accept that blessed Saviour whom we ourselves have embrac'd with an unfeigned Faith; to kindle the same Fervours of divine Love in the Hearts of others, which our own are inflam'd with; to turn many disobedient Sinners to the Wisdom of the Just; to save many Souls from Death, and thereby hide a multitude of Sins; to edify the Members of Christ's mystical Body, by promoting their proficiency in Faith and Holiness, and Comfort to eternal Salvation; to beget many to a living Hope of an heavenly Inheritance, and render them more meet for a share in this blessed Lot of the Saints in Light; to adorn that Doctrine we preach by a shining and blameless Conversation; to direct others in the way to Heaven, by walking before them in that Path of Life; to recommend Religion in it's amiable attractive Lustre to their Eyes (as well as to their Ears) by an exemplary Practice of it. This my Brethren is so truly excellent and noble a Work, this is so important a Service to the Interest of the Kingdom of God, and so highly beneficial to the Souls of Men, that those must be lost to all Sense of God and Goodness, to whom such an Office as this, when faithfully discharg'd, does not appear truly venerable. And therefore the Apostle *Paul* most justly inculcates an affectionate Respect, as due to all able and faithful Teachers from such as enjoy the happy influence of their Ministry, *We beseech you Brethren, know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; and esteem them very highly in Love for their Works Sake*, 1 *Thes.* v. 12. 13. We may and shou'd with him in opposition to the unjust Contempt

of a profane World, magnify our Office, Rom. xi. 13. accounting it our greatest Honour to be intrusted with so excellent a Ministry; and while we discharge it with all Diligence and Fidelity, we may reasonably expect from you, the Deference and Respect that is due to our Character. While these sacred Lamps spend their Oyl to give you Light and Heat, It wou'd be but an ungrateful Return, if we shou'd have occasion to complain of you, as the Apostle Paul does of some in the Church of Corinth, that *the more we love you, the less we are* (respected and) loved by you, 2 Cor. xii. 15.

III. Let me hence exhort those of you who are Teachers in the Church of God, to serve the Uses and Ends of your Office, by being truly *burning and shining Lamps*.

And that you may do so, let me recommend to you more frequent and earnest Application by Faith and Prayer to our Lord Jesus Christ, (that glorious Light of the World) for more abundant Measures of Light and Grace, and of ardent Love to him and the Souls of Men.

And truly when we consider, the vast Importance of our ministerial Office, and the momentous Issues that depend thereon, that the Gospel we publish, is like to be to those that hear it, either a *Savour of Death unto Death, or a Savour of Life unto Life*, We may well cry out with the blessed Apostle, *Who is sufficient for these Things?* 2 Cor. ii. 16. Who is fit to manage such awful Transactions of the great God with his guilty and revolted Creatures in order to the promoting a mutual Reconciliation between him and them? Who can represent the glorious Councils and Methods, the Offers and Proposals of his Wisdom and Grace for the Salvation of lost Sinners, in a manner suitable to the Dignity of the Subject, and Capacities of those they speak unto? Who is fit to deliver such an Embassy from Heaven, on which the Pardon or aggravated Condemnation; the Recovery or Ruin of those to whom we deliver it, does depend? Who is able to speak of these important Matters with that clearness and perspicuity, with that Life and Vigour, with that persuasive Earnestness and Importunity, that a fervent Zeal for the Glory of God and the Salvation of precious Souls shou'd inspire? O what need have we then to look up to him who is the glorious Head of his Church, for a richer Effusion of his Holy Spirit in the Gifts and Graces thereof, for more of a Spirit of Power and Love and a sound Mind! What need have we to beg more of his enlightning, his quickning, his strengthening Presence with us, which he has promis'd to all faithful Teachers *to the End of the World!* Mat. xxviii. ult.

And whatever Measures of Light and Life and holy Zeal we derive from him, we shou'd diligently employ to serve the Interests of his Kingdom, and to promote the Welfare of Immortal Souls. What the Apostle Paul speaks to Timothy, is applicable to all Teachers in the Church of Christ, *stir up the Gift of God which is in thee.* 2 Tim. i. 6. The Word [*ἀναζωοποιέω*] alludes to the Custom of making the fire burn more brightly by blowing it up. So shou'd we endeavour to increase our Gifts by diligent Study, and by the laborious Use of them. We shou'd call up all our Graces to more lively Exercise, that they may animate all our sacred Ministrations. We shou'd rekindle our languid Zeal. Our sacred Work shou'd employ our Heads and our Hearts. The extent as well as the Importance of it, calls for the most intense Application of all our spiritual Powers. Our Lamp of Life cannot burn out in a more excellent Service, than that of conveying divine Light and Warmth to the Souls of Men. We shou'd with the Apostle Paul gladly spend and be spent for them, as those that *seek not theirs, but them.* 2 Cor. xii. 14. 15. We shou'd make it our sincere Endeavour to *fulfil our Ministry* in all the several Branches of it; *To take heed to our-*

selves and to our Doctrine, and to continue in them, that we may both save ourselves and them that hear us. 1 Tim. iv. 16. • We must prosecute the great Ends of our Office with an unwearied Diligence, that we may finish our Course with Joy, and the Ministry we have receiv'd of the Lord Jesus, to testify the Gospel of the Grace of God, Acts xx. 24. This we must pursue as the great End of our Life, and more valuable to us than Life itself. And if we add to all these painful Labours, such an exemplary Holiness of Conversation, as may adorn the Doctrine we publish, as may commend our Sincerity in the Consciences of Men, and may give an additional Force to our Instructions and Persuasions, we shall in some good Measure answer this excellent Character of being *burning and shining Lamps* in our Day and Age. We shall then appear as bright Stars in the Hand of Christ. And thus to approve ourselves to the Eye of our great Lord and Master, is a proper Object of a truly laudible and holy Ambition. See 2 Cor. v. 9.

IV. We may hence see what abundant reason Christian Churches have to adore the distinguishing Favour of God, when he sets up such *burning and shining Lamps* among them.

And truly when we consider, how few of those that assume the Name of Teachers in the Church of Christ, do truly answer this excellent Character, we may justly regard all able and faithful Ones, as the singular Blessings of their Day and Age. If we look into the Eastern and the Greek Churches that are overrun with so much Ignorance and Superstition for want of a judicious Ministry; if we cast our Eye upon the Popish Churches, whose Teachers cause them to err, and even lock up the Key of divine Knowledge from their deluded People, that they may receive all their pernicious Dictates with a blind and implicit Faith; If we contemplate the great Corruption of the sacred Ministry in many of the Protestant Churches themselves, where so many undertake the sacred Office, who are either grossly insufficient for it; or wretchedly negligent of the great Duties of their pastoral Function, or even become by their scandalous immoralities a Reproach and Blemish to it, how distinguishing a Privilege do those Churches enjoy, over whom God is pleas'd to set judicious and wise, holy, humble and laborious Pastors and Teachers! Such happy Churches enjoy peculiar Advantages above others, for eminent Improvements in Light and Knowledge, Purity and Holiness. And it may be reasonably hop'd that such *burning and shining Lamps* will be the blessed Instruments of enlightning, regenerating and sanctifying many Souls. Where such skillful and illustrious Husbandmen are employ'd to plant and water, it may be hop'd, that a gracious God will give an abundant Increase. Such Christian Societies are likely to become fruitful Borders in the Garden of the Lord, and rich Seminaries for planting the Heavens. And when we consider, how many such bright Luminaries in the Church of God, are from time to time extinguished (or rather translated to shine in an higher Orb) We ought to regard it as a merciful Instance of the singular Care and Providence of the great Head of his Church, that he provides for a Succession of such bright Lamps in it, and still furnishes his Harvest with skillful and faithful Labourers, to fill up the Place of such as are gone before them. And those parts of his Vineyard that enjoy their fruitful Labours can never be sufficiently thankful for so distinguishing a Mercy.

But 'tis not enough, that you be thankful for them, For,

V. You shou'd be careful to improve the Ministry of such *burning and shining Lamps*.

Where-ever such able and faithful Teachers are plac'd, those who sit under their Ministry shou'd beware of receiving this Grace (or Favour) of God in vain, 2 Cor.

2Cor. vi. 1. In reference to them it may be truly said, *Behold now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation, viz. Now is the time to attain the saving Knowledge of Divine Truth, when you have the benefit of so judicious and assiduous Instructions. Now is the time for your accepting an offer'd Saviour, and securing an Interest in the great Salvation, when the serious Tenders of it are repeated from day to day. Now is the Season for renewing an happy League of Amity and Peace between God and you, when his faithful Ambassadors in the name and stead of their God and Saviour, so importunately beseech you to be reconcil'd to him. Now is the time for your eminent Proficiency in divine Light and Wisdom, in Grace and Holiness, when you have Line upon Line, and Precept upon Precept. Now is the Season for your abounding in all the Fruits of Righteousness that are to the Glory of God thro' Jesus Christ; while you are under so rich a cultivation of divine Grace. Now is the time for your making considerable Advances in your preparation for the heavenly state, when the inviting Glories of it are so often set before you in their undoubted Certainty, and incomparable Excellency. In a Word, now is the time for your being built up in Faith and Holiness, in Consolation and Joy to eternal Life. How excellent and genuine Effects of the blessed Gospel may be expected from you, to whom the salutary Doctrines of it are so clearly explain'd, on whom the great Duties of it are so warmly inculcated, before whom the glorious Hopes of it are so brightly display'd, and who have so winning Examples of Living Religion before your Eyes.*

'Tis not enough, when you are blessed with such *burning and shining Lamps*, that you *rejoyce for a while in their Light*. 'Tis not a temporary Faith, 'tis not a transient Flash of Affection, that will answer the excellent Ends of their Ministry. The Word they preach must be ingrafted into and rooted in your Hearts, the heavenly Doctrines, and Precepts they deliver, must become living Principles and Laws within you. You must be cast into the Form and Mould of divine Truth. It must be the incorruptible Seed of that spiritual Life that springs up to Life Eternal. Your Path must be *as the shining Light that shines more and more to perfect eternal Day*.

And that I may inforce upon you such a due Improvement of the happy Influence of such burning and shining Lights, I wou'd briefly suggest the following Considerations.

I. Consider, you must be accountable for the excellent Advantages you have enjoy'd under the Ministry of such *burning and shining Lights*.

As all inferior Pastors must be Accountable to the great Shepherd of the Sheep, for the Discharge of that great Trust he has committed to them, and should therefore be concerned to shew that Fidelity and Diligence that may recommend them to his gracious Approbation; So are you no less Accountable for the Improvement of their Ministerial Labours. And O! how dreadfull will your finall Account be, if any of you continue willfully Ignorant under their unwearied Instructions, if you continue secure and obdurate in your Sins, under all their Solemn calls to Repentence, compassionate Warnings of your Danger. If you remain *Dead in Sin*, under the assiduous Ministrations of the Word of Life; if you persist in a careless Neglect of the great Salvation, and the most affecting Discoverys and Tenders of it; if that Gospel of Christ which in its native Tendency is a quickening Saviour prove to you (thro' your wretched unbelief or Inconsideration of it, or Unity against it) a Saviour of Death unto Death. O! Tremble at those awfull Words of our Blessed Lord, *who-soever shall not receive you, nor bear your Words,*

*when ye depart out of that House or City, shake off the Dust of your Feet. Verily I say unto you, it shall be more Tolerable for the Land of Sodom and Gomorrah, in the Day of Judgment, than for that City, Matt. x. 14, 15. Their Guilt is great, and their Condemnation will be Terrible, to whom such bright and burning Lamps shine in vain. Those who like Capernaum, are exalted to Heaven, (by having such Stars fixed among them) will, if they improve not their beneficial Light and Influence, be cast the lower into Hell, and even the uninstructed Heathens will rise up in Judgment against them. Matt. 23. If you continue Imperfusable and Impenitent, under such a judicious and faithfull Ministry, all their painfull Instructions, all their serious Admonitions, all their Pathetic Exhortations, will be sad Evidences against you, that by putting away the Word of God, you Judge your selves unworthy of everlasting Life. O then Consider, how deeply your own eternal Interest is concerned in preventing this dismall Issue! I will close this Head with those remarkable Words of the Inspired Writer to the Hebrews, *the Earth that drinketh in the Rain, that often comes upon it, and bringeth forth Herbs for Meat for them for whom it is dressed, receiveth Blessing from God. But that which bears Thorns and Bryars, is rejected; and is nigh unto Cursing, whose End is to be burned. But Beloved, we are persuaded better Things of you, and Things that accompany Salvation, tho' we thus Speak* by way of necessary Caution.) vi. He. 7, 8, 9.*

2. Consider, that you can no way better shew that affectionate respect you profess to bear to your faithfull Teachers, than by such a due Improvement of their Ministerial Labours.

Your Teachers and Spiritual Guides, are called to *watch over your Souls as Men that must give an Account of them*. But Alas! If their Ministry should meet with little Success, they are like to Watch over you, not with Joy, but with Grief, xiii. Heb. 17. If you slight and Disregard their Message, if you turn a deaf Ear to all their compassionate Exhortations, you send them to their Lord and Master with those mournfull Complaints, *who has believed our Report? And to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed; We have all the Day long stretched out our Hands to a gainsaying and disobedient People, we have run and laboured in Vain*, liii. If. 1. Rom. x. 21. No bitter Reproaches of their Blind malignant Enemies, no Hardships or sufferings that their Ministerial Profession exposes them to go so near their Hearts, as the unfruitfulness of their Ministry it self. How often do they Mourn in Secret, when they have Occasion to renew the Apostle Pauls Complaint, *for many Walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you Weeping, that they are Enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose End is Destruction, whose God is their Belly, who Glory in their Shame, who mind earthly Things*, iii. Phil. 18, 19.

Whereas, if they can but see any considerable Success of their Ministerial Labours in the Conversion of many Souls to God, and in the Edification of the living Members of Christs Mystical Body, their Service how Painfull soever to the Flesh will be Sweet and delightfull to their Minds. They will Watch over you with Joy. If there be Joy among the Angels in Heaven, upon the Repentance of a Sinner, much more will these Angels of the Churches rejoyce in it, whom God honours to be the Instruments of so blessed a Change! And they can truly say, concerning those of their Flocks, in whom they behold the Work of Faith, the Labour of Love, and the Patience of Hope successfully advanced, as the Apostle Paul does of his Beloved Thessalonians, *to whom his Gospel came not only in Word, but in Power, what is our Hope, or Joy, or Crown*

Crown of Rejoycing? Are not even ye in the Presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his Coming? For ye are our Glory and our Joy. 1 Thes. ii. 3, 4, 5, 19, 20, v. compared. They can truly say with the same Apostle, concerning the same Persons, *we are Comforted over you in all our Afflictions and Distress by your Faith: For now we live, if ye stand fast in the Lord.* 1 Thes. iii. 7, 8.

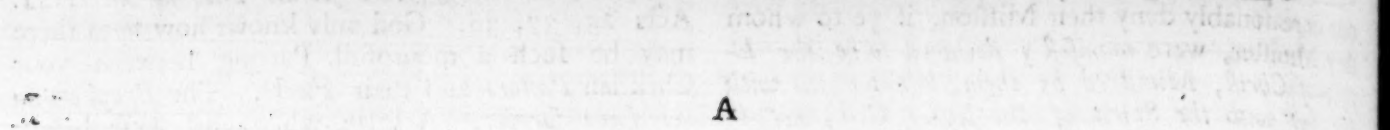
If then you have any affectionate Esteem for your faithfull Teachers, if you would encourage their Hearts, and strengthen their Hands in their Majesties Service, furnish them with this occasion of Joy. There is nothing they would more Rejoyce in, than to see you Walk in the Truth. They would despise the Ignorance or Perverseness of those that unreasonably deny their Mission, if ye to whom they Minister, were manifestly declared to be the *Epistle of Christ, Ministred by them, Written not with Ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in Tables of Stone, but in the fleshy Tables of your Hearts,* 2 Cor. iii. 1, 2, 3. If our Labours be Successful to form Christ in your Hearts, and ye thereby became the Seals of our Ministry, we shall Regard it as a most authentick Testimonial from Heaven to our Sincerity, and it will render the Thoughts of our finall Account more Comfortable.

3. Consider, that you know not how long you are to enjoy the Influence of such burning and shining Lamps.

Their Lamp of natural Life is but a Vapour that appeareth for a little Time, and then suddenly Vanishes away, iii. James 14. Some of these Sacred Lamps have after shining a few Years disappeared. Others of them are wearing away apace; And 'tis but a few, (tho' blessed be God that there are any new Lamps that are rising up among us. This precious Treasure of divine Light and Grace is lodged in earthen Vessels, poor frail and mortal Creatures. And we little know how soon an un-

foreseen Distemper or other Accident may dash them in Pieces. And as this should quicken all faithfull Teachers to a diligent Improvement of the short Time of so uncertain and precarious a Life, in prosecuting the excellency of their Ministry; so it should no less excite your Diligence in the Improvement of their Ministerial Labours. We may observe, what a sorrowfull parting it occasioned, between the Apostle Paul, and the Elders of Ephesus, when he said to them, *behold I know that ye all, among whom I have gone Preaching the Kingdom of God shall see my Face no more.* 'Tis said, they all wept Sore, and fell on Paul's Neck and kissed him, sorrowing most of all for the Words that he spake, that they should see his Face no more, xx. Acts 25, 37, 38. God only knows how soon there may be such a mournfull Parting between your Christian Pastors and their Flocks. The Prophets do not Live forever. A little while and these bright Lamps will Shine no more on this lower Earth. 'Tis but a little Time that you can Rejoyce in their Light, while you yet enjoy it, So conscientiously improve their Labours by a proficiency in divine Knowledge and Grace, that both you and they may have the Prospect of a joyfull Meeting in the Kingdom of God. Make the best use of their Instructive and directive Light before Death (as to you) extinguish it. Hear the Voice of these wise heavenly Charmers, before Death Silence it. Receive the welcome Message of these Embassadors of Christ, before their great Master call them home. Improve their beneficial Influences for the Increase of divine Light and Life and Love in your Souls, and then at the Day of our Blessed Lords Appearance, shall you Shine as the Brightness of the Firmament, and your faithfull Teachers as Stars (in their heavenly Orbs,) forever and ever. xii. Dan. 3. v.



[illegible]

S E R M O N

The Reverend Mr. ELIAS TRAVERS.

PREACH'D at the



To the Congregation at Cook-street, late under the pastoral Care of the Reverend
Mr. Elias Travers

 Our Relation to your late Reverend Pastor and cordial Affection to him are sufficient Reasons for my presenting to you this Funeral Sermon which was Preach'd, and is now Printed in compliance with your Request. And as I doubt not you design'd hereby to shew your grateful respect to his precious Memory, so you'll see by this Discourse that your Relation to him is not so entirely dissolved by Death itself as to exempt you from all the Duties that result from it. The particular Duty urged on you in this Sermon is I fear too little considered, and too woefully neglected. And the Providence of God seems to give us a louder Call to it, when so many excellent Ministers are taken away in the vigour of their Age, and the height of their usefulness. I could not but take notice to this Purpose, that upon my imparting an Account of the Reverend Mr. Travers's Death to my worthy Brother Mr. Henry of Chester, I received from him the sorrowful Tidings of the lamented Death of the Reverend Mr. Charlton of Manchester; One who for Learning and Judgment, and all Ministerial Endowments in an happy conjunction with exemplary Piety has left very few Equals behind him, among his Brethren, in that part of the Kingdom. And yet tho' of a seemingly strong and firm Constitution: He dy'd in the 40th Year of his Age. What shall we say, when by the righteous Hand of an offended God, we are thus broken, with Breach upon Breach? 'Tis but an awful Omen to the House and Vineyard of God among us, when such Pillars are thrown down, such tall Cedars fell'd, and such fruitful Labourers remov'd. 'Tis no sign of our being on good Terms with him, when so many faithful Embassadors of his are call'd home by an immature Death. May those of us that survive be quickened by such Warnings, to dispatch our great Work with more of holy Zeal and Diligence, when we know not how short our Time of Service may be, that our Lord when he comes may find us so doing! And may the compassionate Shepherd and Bishop of Souls look upon his desolate Flocks, and provide for them such Pastors as by a peculiar Eminency of Graces and Gifts are every way fitted and disposed (according to the Apostle Peter's excellent advice, 1 Pet. v. 2. 3.) to feed the Flock of God as much as in them lies, taking the oversight (or Episcopal care) over them, not by constraint but willingly, not for filthy Lucre, but of a ready mind, not as being Lords over God's Heritage, but being Ensamples to the Flock. That this rich Blessing may in particular be bestowed on you, is the hearty Prayer of

Your Affectionate Well-wisher,

And Servant in our common Lord,

J. B.

SER-

SERMON XXXVII.

HEBR. xiii. V. 7.

Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have spoken to you the Word of God, whose Faith follow, considering the end of their Conversation. Or, Remember your Guides who have spoken to you the Word of God, and considering the issue of their Conversation, imitate their Faith.

THE generality of Christians seem to think that they have paid the last Respect due to their deceased, holy, Pastors, when they have laid their earthly Remains in the silent Grave, and shed a few Tears at their mournful Funeral. This Testimony indeed of your Esteem and Love you have already shewn to my deceased Brother. He has (as Stephen) been carried to his Burial by devout Men, who have made great Lamentation over him. Acts viii. 2. We the surviving Eliphaz's have taken up the Mantle which our ascending Elijah had drop'd, and have committed it to the safe Repository of the Grave; Nor cou'd we forbear crying out with Eliphaz on that sorrowful Occasion, *My Father, My Father. The Chariot of Israel, and the Horjemen thereof.* 2 Kings ix. 9. But my Text tells us, there is a far more lasting and durable Respect which we still owe to him. We must erect a Monument for him, (even one more valuable than that of Marble) in our own grateful Minds and Memories. There, tho' dead, he must still live; And tho' silent, he must still speak. Nay, my Text obliges me to make a difficult but noble Attempt of Raising him from the dead. Not indeed by bringing back his departed Soul from those Mansions of Light 'tis entered into, or his Body from the Dust of the Earth, to which it is return'd: (For this would be as highly injurious to him as to bring a Man back to be tost on the tempestuous Sea that is happily landed on the Shore) But by Reviving his holy Faith and heavenly Conversation in you that survive. And such an Attempt, if it succeed, will be infinitely beneficial to you. Nay, perhaps the knowledge of it's Success would be to him a particular Accession to his Happiness and Joy. And this is the Excellent Design I shall pursue in speaking to the Words I have read, *Remember your Guides, &c.*

The Subject which they offer for your Meditation and Improvement lies plain before you, viz.

That Christian Flocks should remember their deceased Holy Pastors (or spiritual Guides,) and should by considering the end (or issue) of their Conversation, excite themselves to an Imitation of their holy Faith.

In speaking hereto, I shall consider,

I. *Whom you are call'd to remember, viz. Your deceased spiritual Guides.*

II. *In what Manner, and To what Purposes you should Remember them, As particularly in order to your Imitation of their holy Faith.*

III. *How you should improve the consideration of the End (or Issue) of their Conversation, as a powerful Motive and Incitement to imitate their holy Faith.*

The Subject being entirely practical, I shall at once Explain and Urge the great Duty which my Text recommends.

Let us then consider,

Question, I. *Whom you are call'd to remember?*

Ans. *Your deceased Holy Pastors or spiritual Guides!*

For that the Inspired Writer speaks not here of their Living Guides but their Deceased ones, is the judgment of the best Expositors, and evident from the Text it self; He intends those Guides or Rulers, who had spoken to them the Word of God. And he calls them to contemplate or look back upon the End, (the close or issue) of their Conversation. And where as for their Living Guides he commands them to obey them at v. 17. Those in my Text he calls them to Remember, supposing them to be dead and gone.

I would only here farther Observe, That those spiritual Guides whom the Inspired Writer calls them to Remember, were such as had spoken to them the Word of God, or such as labour'd in the Word and Doctrine. Not such as engross'd the Power of Ruling to themselves while they left the more laborious Work of Teaching to others. Again, They were such whose Conversation they were to reflect upon and consider in order to the Imitating their Faith. They were such therefore with whom they had personally convers'd, with whose Exemplary Life they were well acquainted, and the noble Effects of whose Divine Faith they were capable to know and observe. And not such whose Faces they scarce ever beheld, and to whose Conversation they were entire Strangers. This Duty may indeed be easily paid by particular Flocks to their spiritual Guides that have resided among them; But can hardly be so, by a Score or an Hundred Churches to a distant and in a great measure unknown Person, whom the greatest Part of them scarce ever saw or heard, and towards whom, tho' he may bear the Name, he cannot discharge the various particular Duties of a Pastor or spiritual Guide.

I Proceed to Consider,

II. *In what Manner, and to what Excellent purpose you should remember your deceased spiritual Guides.*

Ans. For the Prevention of Mistakes, I must suggest something both Negatively and Positively.

Negatively.

You must by no means on pretence of Remembering your Deceased holy Pastors, offer up any such Religious Worship to them as either intrenches on the incommunicable Glory of God, or on the peculiar Dignity

Dignity of our Lord Jesus, as the only Mediator between God and Man.

You must by no means offer up any such Religious Worship to them as intrenches on the incommunicable Glory of God. And therefore we justly condemn the scandalous Excesses of the Roman Church, in their Devotion to Departed Saints: Such I mean as their Consecrating Churches to them; Setting up their Images or Reliques in their Churches as Objects of the People's Veneration; Their Celebrating Masses to their Honour (which they account too a most Solemn Act of their Devotion;) But especially their common practice of Praying to them. For such Invocation or Prayer Address'd to them does in the very Nature and Genuine Construction of the Act (whatever be the Intention of the Offerers) ascribe to departed Saints, that unlimited knowledge of all our particular Circumstances, nay of our Hearts themselves, and that Unlimited Power to help us, which we have just ground (both from Scripture and Reason) to appropriate to God as his incommunicable Glory. And therefore we cannot but regard this Practice as a violation of the first Command, and a real Instance of Idolatry, viz. An unjust Invasion of God's peculiar rights, and a giving some part of that Glory to his Creatures, which belongs to him alone. And 'tis no sufficient excuse that they do not intend to equalize the Saints with God. They may own in Opinion an Infinite Distance between God and them, and yet in Practice pay some part of that Religious Respect and Honour to them which he claims as his sole due, and will not give to another. *Jl. xlii. 8.* And this is what we Charge them with in making any other Inhabitant of the invisible World, besides the Omnipresent God, the Object of Prayer. 'Tis his peculiar Character and Glory; To be the Hearer of Prayer, to whom all Flesh should come. *Pf. lxxv. 2.*

Nor must we offer any such Religious Respect to them as intrenches on the peculiar Dignity of our Lord Jesus Christ, the only Mediator between God and Man.

We must not therefore, with the Romish Church, set up Deceased Saints as Mediators or Intercessors, nor Flee to their Patronage under that Character. The Scriptures assure us, *There is but One God, and One Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus. 1 Tim. ii. 5.* They allow no prevalent Intercession in Heaven, but what is founded on an Expiatory Oblation on Earth. They recommend no other Advocate with the Father but Jesus Christ the Righteous, who is the only Propitiation for the Sins of the World. We dare not then come to God in any other Name but his. *1 Job. ii. 1, 2.* Nor have we any reasonable Inducement to make use of any other Master of Requests in the Court of Heaven. He alone is Constituted in that Office by the Father. We are sure of his willingness to Plead our Cause, who has declared, *That whoever comes to him, he will in no wise cast him out. Job. vi. 37.* And we are sure, That his Pleas alone are sufficient, who by his ever living to intercede for us, is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him. *Heb. vii. 25.* We dare not therefore arraign his Will, or his Power and Interest, by making any others Joint-Intercessors with him, and by becoming officious Clients to any other Patron besides him.

And I am sure such Religious Worship is no part of the Respect that my Text obliges us to pay to our deceased Pastors.

Positively,

Your Remembring your Deceased Holy Pastors does imply your Often Entertaining affectionate and honourable Thoughts of them, and that in order to the imitation of their Faith.

1. Your Remembring your deceased Holy Pastors or Spiritual Guides implies, Your often Entertaining affectionate and honourable Thoughts of them.

And such affectionate and honourable Thoughts you should entertain of them, both on the Account of

their past Service on Earth; and on the Account of their present Reward in Heaven.

On the Account of their past Service on Earth.

That gracious God that has told us, *The Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance, Pf. cxii. 6.* expects that we should concur in accomplishing that Promise, and not counteract it by Burying their eminent Virtues in ungrateful Oblivion. Their Righteous Judge does not, and he expects that you should not, forget their Work and their Labour of Love, which they have shew'd to his Name in Ministering to his Saints. *Heb. vi. 10.* You should often recall to mind concerning your deceased Spiritual Guides, with what fidelity and diligence they have delivered to you the uncorrupted Doctrine of the Gospel, and fed you with the unadulterated Milk of his holy Word! How careful they were to declare to you the whole Counsel of God, and to keep themselves pure from the Blood of all Men! *Acts xx. 26, 27.* With how tender Compassion they have long'd for you all in the Bowels of Christ! *1 Phil. 8.* (The like pity towards you, breathing in their Hearts that was so conspicuous in the Shepherd and Bishop of Souls.) With how anxious Thoughts and with how uneasy Pangs, they have travell'd in Birth over you till that Blessed Redeemer was formed in your Hearts! *Gal. iv. 19.* How industrious and unwearied they were to Preach the Word, To be instant in Season and out of Season, To reprove, To rebuke, To exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine, and to make full Proof of their Ministry! *2 Tim. iv. 2, 5.* What pains they took to follow their publick Instructions, with private Admonitions and Counsels, Teaching not only publickly but from House to House, warning every one Night and Day with Tears! *Acts xx. 20, 31.* Nor should you forget how solicitous they were to adorn the Doctrine they Preach'd with an unblemish'd Conversation, shining therein as Lights in the World! How careful they were to shew themselves in all Things, Patterns of good Works, and Examples to the Flock instead of acting as Lords over it! *1 Tit. 2, 7. 1 Pet. v. 3.* You should often reflect on all that ardent Zeal for the glory of God, and affectionate concern for the Salvation of precious Souls, that so conspicuously Breath'd in all their holy Ministrations! You should remember how willing they were to spend and be spent in their Master's Service! In what painful Toyls and Cares for advancing the Kingdom of God, and the Interest of practical Religion, the precious Oyl in their Lamp of Life, was gradually wasted, and at last Extinguish'd! The Memory of all the Just should be precious; and much more of those that were not only just themselves, but the happy Instruments of turning many disobedient Sinners to the Wisdom of the Just. *1 Luke 17.*

You should also Entertain affectionate and honourable Thoughts of them.

On account of their present Reward in Heaven.

You should be mindful not only of What they have been, but of what they now are. You should therefore follow them in your believing Thoughts from Earth to Heaven, from their State of Tryal to that of glorious Retribution. You have seen them here Wise and Industrious in turning many to Righteousness; You should now Contemplate them shining as the brightness of the Firmament and as the Stars for ever and ever. *Dan. xii. 3.* You have here beheld them as Stars in the Right Hand of Christ, and seen how burning and shining Lights they were, diffusing holy Light and Warmth to all within the influence of their Sphere; You should now regard them as Translated to an Higher Orb, and shining with far brighter Lustre as Stars of the first magnitude there. You have here beheld them feeding the Flock of God with a laborious diligence, In weariness and painfulness. In watching and fastings and incessant Cares. *2 Cor. xi. 27, 28.* Approving themselves the Ministers of God, by pureness, by knowledge, by kindness, by the Holy Ghost, by Love unfeigned, by the Word of Truth, by the power of God, by

the Armour of Righteousness on the right-hand, and on the left, by honour and dishonour, by good report and evil report; As deceivers, and yet true; As unknown, and yet well known; &c. As sorrowful, and yet always rejoicing; As poor, yet making many rich; As having nothing, yet possessing all Things. 2 Cor. vi. 6, 7, 8. &c. You should now behold these Inferior Pastors approv'd by the chief Shepherd, and adjudged to those unfading Crowns of glory that he has reserved for them. 2 Pet. v. 4.

But of this I shall have occasion to speak more afterwards.

I proceed therefore to add.

2. That you should thus remember your deceased spiritual Guides in order to your Imitation of their holy Faith.

And this is indeed the principal End and Purpose you should remember them for.

And here as their Faith may be understood either Objectively for the Doctrine they preach'd; or Subjectively, For the Habit or Grace of divine Faith; You must be followers of them in both.

You must be Followers of their Faith, taken objectively, for the Doctrine they preach'd.

They have with affectionate solemnity commended you to God and to the Word of his Grace, that is able to build you up, and to give you an Inheritance among them that are sanctify'd. Acts xx. 32. And you should so remember how you have receiv'd and heard, as to retain and hold fast the Form of sound Words they have deliver'd. You should instead of being carried away with divers and strange Doctrines, get your Minds establish'd with Grace, in the belief of those important fundamental Truths of the Gospel, which are like the Blessed Author of it, *The same yesterday and to day, and for ever.* (As the Inspired Writer intimates in the 2 Verses following the Text.) Look not only on any Man but on any Angel as accus'd that should preach to you any other Gospel than what the Scriptures contain, and your faithful Pastors have delivered conformably to their Instructions there laid down. See that ye be rooted in divine Faith as well ground'd in divine Love. It was one great Design of their judicious and laborious Instructions to fortify you against the various Artifices of subtil Seducers that would pervert you from the simplicity and purity of the Christian Faith, and to prevent your being like Children tossed to and fro, with every Wind of Doctrine thro' the sleight of Men and cunning craftiness whereby they lye in wait to deceive. Eph. iv. 14. Let not all their indefatigable Diligence herein prove only lost Labour.

But you should especially be Followers or Imitators of their Faith, (Subjectively taken for the Habit or Grace of divine Faith,) and that in all the noble Effects and Fruits of it.

See that your Assent to the great Truths of Christianity be so prevalent and strong, as to deliver your Souls into the Sacred Mould and Form of them. See that your Faith purify your Hearts. Acts xv. 9. See that it be the living Principle of good Works, or sincere and universal Obedience. James ii. 18. See that it work by Love. Gal. v. 6. See that it kindle in your Hearts all ardours of devout Affection to that Blessed God, who has in the Incarnate Son of his Love discovered himself to be infinite and boundless Love. See that it enflame them with fervent Love to all that bear his amiable Image, and that Love our Blessed Saviour in sincerity. See that it prompt you to Love your Enemies themselves in imitation of the matchless Love of God extended to you, when you were perverse Enemys to him, Especially see that your Faith overcome the World 1 Job. v. 4. by rendring it's strongest Temptations ineffectual, and representing Things seen and Temporal as unworthy to come in any rational competition with Things unseen and Eternal. To that end, See that your Faith be according to the excellent description given of it by

this inspired Writer. Heb. xii. 1. The substance of Things hoped for, and the evidence of Things not seen. See that it so substantiate the future Realities of the World to come, that it may be instead of presence and actual Possession. See that it represent them in so clear and satisfying a Light, as to be instead of actual Sight, by giving you the like affecting and ravishing and Heart-assuring Persuasion of them, as if your very Eyes beheld them. Such glorious Effects as these did the Faith of your pious Pastors produce in them. Thus did they live the Life they liv'd in the Flesh by the Faith of the Son of God who loved them, and gave himself for them. Gal. ii. 20. Thus did they shew their Faith by their Works. Jam. ii. 18. Thus did they by an holy mortified heavenly Conversation shew forth the Virtues of him that had called them out of Darkness, into his marvellous Light. 1 Pet. ii. 9. Thus did they live as seeing him that is invisible, and with a steady regard to the recompence of reward. Heb. xi. 26, 27. Be ye then the zealous Imitators of their Faith in all it's transforming influence on their Hearts and Lives.

But this leads me

III. To shew, How you should Improve the End (or Issue) of your deceased Pastor's Conversation as a Motive to imitate their holy Faith.

As to the End of their Conversation, Expositors somewhat differ? Some understand thereby their Perseverance in true Piety and Holiness to the end of this Life: Others understand it of the happy Issue of this Life in the Glory and Blessedness of that which is to come.

And whither Way soever we interpret the Phrase, It contains a very proper Motive to excite us to an Imitation of their Faith.

1. It should excite you to imitate the Faith of your deceased Pastors, to consider their Perseverance in true Piety and Holiness to the end of their Life.

Their Example should greatly confirm your belief of the Doctrine they taught.

When you have observ'd the lively and powerful Impression of those divine Truths on their own Souls which they have perswaded you to embrace; When you have found those difficult and costly, those noble and sublime Duties of Christianity exemplify'd in their own Temper and Behaviour which they were wont to urge on you; When you have beheld all those God-like Qualities shining in their Spirit and Conversation, wherein they have perswaded you, to be Followers of him as dear Children. Eph. v. 1. When you have discerned all those amiable Fruits of Christianity conspicuous in them, which they have so often exhorted you to abound in; When you have beheld them by Faith, trampling on all the Allurements and Terrors of this World; rejecting it's most tempting Advantages whenever their Conscience and Duty has interfer'd with their temporal Interest; serving the Cause of God with an unfainting Fidelity under great Hardships and in the Exercise of great self-denial; When you have seen them own his Interest in the Face of the greatest Dangers; and ready, if call'd to it, to seal their Faith with their Blood. When you have seen them steadfast and unmovable as well as always abounding in the Work of the Lord; 1 Cor. xv. ult. When you have seen them so, fighting the good Fight of Faith, as to finish their Course with Joy; 2 Tim. iv. 7. When you have beheld them holding fast their Integrity till they dy'd, and committing their departing Souls with a steady affiance into their merciful Saviour's Hands; When you have seen them go off the Stage without leaving any observable Blot or Stain upon their Christian and Ministerial Profession; When you have seen them effectually supported against all the Terrors of Death by the joyful Hopes of that blessed Immortality which they have urg'd you to believe

live and expect; O how does such an Exemplary Conversation, and such a steady Perseverance therein tend to establish your Faith in that heavenly Doctrine they taught! What a solid and satisfying Evidence is such a Life and Death of the Truth of that Holy Religion that has produc'd so excellent Effects in them that were the Ministers of it! How much does it tend to take off that unhappy but deep prejudice that so many conceive against the Gospel when they compare it's Doctrines and Rules with the Lives not only of the Professors, but even the Preachers of it! Alas, When they see those that should Preach Piety and Holiness to others, practice little of it themselves. When they see a Train of Levity and Folly, Leudness and Impurity in those whose Doctrine and Profession obliges them to be eminent Patterns of Wisdom and Gravity, Abstinence and Sanctity to others; When they behold Ambition and Pride, Sensuality and Luxury, or sordid Covetousness reigning in the pretended Preachers of Humility and Mortification, and an heavenly Mind and Life. How prone are they in their blind and rash Judgment to censure Religion as a Cheat, and the Ministerial Office as meer Priest-craft! Nay how does it make them abhor and despise those Ordinances and Offerings of the Lord which they see touch'd with so unclean and unallow'd Hands! And little do ungodly scandalous Ministers consider, What a fatal Wound they give to the honour of Religion by the shameful inconsistency of their Profession with their Practice; They may complain, and for fashion sake declaim against the Atheism and Infidelity of the Age, But they are of all Men most accessary to the spreading of it. But let us (my Brethren) take our measures of Christianity by those that have liv'd as well as preach'd the great Truths and Dutys of it. And that persevering Holiness of theirs, which gave such a Lustre to their Profession while they liv'd, will be no inconsiderable Confirmation of our Faith when they are dead.

And as their Example should confirm your Belief of the Doctrine they Taught, so should it excite in you a commendable Emulation to imitate them in all the genuine and excellent Fruits of their Divine Faith. For their Example clearly shews the possibility of that holy Heavenly Conversation which they so often recommended. It shews the possibility of it not only to such a sinless Person as the incarnate Son of God, but to Men of like Passions (and sinful Infirmities) with yourselves, who had the same Corruptions to subdue, as well as the same Temptations to resist as you have. It gives you therefore all possible Encouragement to tread in their Steps, and to be Followers of them, so far as they were of Christ, 1 Cor. xi. 1. Your deceas'd holy Ministers are the most observable and conspicuous part of that Cloud of Witnesses you are encompass'd with, who do by their bright Example most powerfully incite you to run with patience the Race that is set before you, Heb. xii. 1. Let us all then by fixing our Eye upon them reproach our own Negligence and Sloath, quicken our holy Industry and Diligence, animate our divine Faith and Hope, and be ambitious to adorn our Profession with a shining Conversation. Let us with them be found Faithful to the Death that we may receive the Crown of Life, Rev. i. 1. Otherwise the excellent Effects of their Living will condemn our dead and barren Faith, or rather our practical Infidelity.

But,

If we understand by the End of our deceas'd Pastor's Conversation the happy Issue of it in the glory and blessedness of the Life to come, it is in this sense also a powerful Motive to incite us to an Imitation of their holy Faith.

And this indeed seems to be the meaning of the inspired Writer. The Word *enosis* in the Original properly signifies an Escape, see 1 Cor. x. 13. It does not express a meer end or common Issue of Things, but an happy end, that is attended with Victory and Deli-

verance out of past Difficulties and Dangers, Calamities and Evils.

To clear this we must consider the present State of all Christians, and much more of Ministers, is justly represented in Scripture as a Warfare and Combat, 2 Tim. ii. 3. We have here restless and malicious spiritual Enemies to resist, tedious Labours and Conflicts to go thro', and manifold Hardships to endure, and Hazards to run. We have not meerly Flesh and Blood (wicked Men) but Principalities and Powers to wrestle with, Eph. vi. 12; and must expect the utmost opposition from the Prince of the Aerial Host, whose Kingdom we endeavour to subvert. We have the perverse contradiction of Sinners to bear; we have many a sharp Assault of Temptation to repel; and we have the same Relicts of in-dwelling Sin as others to contend against. Our holy Profession obliges us to continual painful Studies and Toils. We meet with manifold and great Discouragements, not only from the scorn and hatred of a blinded World, but much more from the unsuccessfulness of our Ministry, and most of all from our own sad Defects and Failures in the discharge of it. And we are here liable to all the common Afflictions and Evils of this Life, with others; our Souls are liable to the same spiritual Desertions, our Names to the same unjust Reproaches and Calumnies, our Bodies to the same Maladies, and especially such as a sedentary Life does peculiarly expose Men to. Such a laborious, such a wearisome Conflict as this, is a faithful Minister's Life.

But my Text calls us to contemplate their happy Escape out of all these afflictive Evils. We are now to behold them not in their Combat, but in their Triumph; not toiling in the Vineyard and bearing there the burden and heat of the Day, Matt. xx; but resting from their Labours, while their Works follow them, Rev. xiv. 13. We are now to contemplate them as exchanging their light and momentary Afflictions for an exceeding and eternal weight of Glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17. We are to behold them as now releas'd from the uneasy Fetters of an infirm and mortal Body under which they groan'd, and enter'd into the heavenly Paradise, where there is no subtle Serpent to tempt or beguile; gone from the Confusions and Miseries of a distracted World, and from the Corruptions of the degenerate divided Churches, which they here so bitterly lamented to the World of Spirits above, and to that blessed Community there, whose beautiful Order and concordant Unity, and perfect Purity they here admir'd, and earnestly aspir'd unto. We are call'd to contemplate them, not as afflicted and persecuted here, but as glorify'd and reigning there. We must by Faith view them as now adorn'd with shining Wisdom and spotless Holiness, as receiv'd into the Embraces, and imparadis'd in the bosom of infinite eternal Love. We must contemplate them as enjoying not meerly the common Reward of the Righteous, but the special Reward of God's faithful Prophets, Matt. x. 41. We must consider them as the brightest Stars in the Firmament of the highest Heavens, and behold those radiant Crowns of Glory that now adorn their Heads, and infinitely compensate for all the scorn and contumelious usage they met with from a malignant World.

And oh how powerfully should the Contemplation hereof excite you to an imitation of their Faith! you are all call'd with the same high and heavenly Calling. You have all the same incorruptible Prize set before you; for you the same heavenly Kingdom and the endless Joys thereof are prepar'd; to you the same Honour and Glory and Immortality is propos'd as the object of your laudable Ambition, and will be your happy Acquisition, if you seek it by patient continuance in well-doing, Rom. ii. 7. You are tending in the same Paths of Holiness, to the same state of perfect Light and Life, Love and Joy; you have the same Blessed Saviour to be your Guide, the Captain of your Salvation, the Author and Finisher of your Faith, you have the same bo-

ly Spirit to prepare you for the heavenly Inheritance, and to be even here the earnest and Pledge of it, *Eph. i. 14.* And for you that incorruptible unfading Inheritance is reserv'd in the highest Heavens, *1 Pet. i. 4.* O! be not then sloathful, but Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the promises, *Heb. vi. 12.* 'Tis by frequent and realizing Thoughts of their blessed State, that you must maintain some Communion here with those perfected Spirits of the Just, to whom you are already come in Relation, in Faith, and Hope, *Heb. xii. 23.* And did we but converse more in our believing Meditations with that glorious World above, with Angels, with Prophets and Apostles, with all those pious Relations and Friends, and faithful Ministers of Christ, with whom we have convers'd here in this World as Heirs of the same Promises; oh how would it endear and familiarize Heaven more to our Thoughts! How would it facilitate the pleasing Ascent of our Affections thither! How would it fire our Souls with an holy Ambition to be more entirely conform'd to those heavenly Inhabitants in our Temper and Disposition, to whom we are so nearly ally'd by our supernatural Birth! How would it deaden us to this World, and give our divine Faith an easy Victory over the manifold Temptations thereof! How would it animate us to steady perseverance in the Ways of Holiness, and fortify us against all Discouragements that might tempt us to grow weary of well-doing, or to faint in our Minds, *Gal. vi. 9.* How wou'd it kindle in us ardent Desires after the Converses and Entertainments of that blessed Society above, and make us long to share in their Work and Joys! In a Word, how would it produce in us all the noble Effects and Fruits of that divine Faith which our deceas'd holy Pastors were such bright Examples of, and by which they and all true Christians have attain'd to that endless Glory and Happiness which they now possess! Let us then be Followers of that Faith and Hope of theirs which is now turn'd into Sight and Enjoyment.

Thus I have consider'd the Duty which the Text recommends to Christian Flocks, in reference to their deceas'd spiritual Guides.

But it will be justly expected I should make a more particular Application of it, in reference to my deceas'd Brother and your late faithful Pastor. And indeed he was so remarkable an Example of that divine Faith in which my Text obliges you to be Followers of your deceas'd spiritual Guides, that I am sorry that (partly thro' the defectiveness of proper Memoirs † and partly through my incapacity to improve the few I have) I shall not be able to represent it with that real Advantage, and set it out in so good a Light as it deserves. But the truth is, your general acquaintance with him will render it less necessary for me to enlarge on this Head. I shall therefore content myself with giving this true, though defective Account of him.

Mr. ELIAS TRAVERS was Son of Mr. Thomas Travers, a N. C. Minister, in some part of Cornwall; for as to the place and exact time of his Birth, I could not from his surviving Relations themselves meet with any particular Account of it. And for his Extraction and Parentage, so great was his Modesty, so just a Contempt had he of all those external Advantages that others are so apt to value themselves upon, that notwithstanding my long and intimate Acquaintance with him, I never understood till upon the particular Enquiry I had now occasion to make, that he was nearly related to several Honourable as well as pious Families, which I chiefly mention, not to raise his Character, by consideration so extrenick and feperable from real worth, but to recommend his amiable Humility, in his burying in so entire silence what most

others are apt to talk so loud of. And I am the rather oblig'd to mention it, because the first observable Account I have met with concerning him, was his coming over with the Right Honourable the Earl of Radnor, when he enter'd on the Government of this Kingdom, A. D. 1669. He was then about twenty Years of Age, and employ'd by that honourable Person (whose Nephew he was) in the Secretaries Office. My Lord Roberts being soon remov'd from his Government here, Mr. Travers return'd with him to England. And the Earl proposing to him the study either of Divinity, Law, or Physick, he in pursuance to his Advice, enter'd into Christ's-Colledge in Cambridge, where though he made the Study of Physick the Diversion and Entertainment of his more leisure Hours, yet he chiefly turn'd his Thoughts to Divinity. Having spent some Years there, and taken his Degree as Master of Arts; he left the University, and was by several of his Relations earnestly urg'd to conform to the Establish'd Church, in which their Interest as well as his own Abilities and Merits, gave them a prospect of obtaining considerable Advantages for him. But he having maturely weigh'd the Declarations and Subscriptions requir'd, as Terms of Ministerial Conformity, and finding that they were such as his Judgment could not comply with, prefer'd the peace of his Conscience before those offer'd Preferments, and in opposition to the importunate Solicitation of several of his Relations, (that were most capable to befriend him) espous'd the despis'd Cause of Non-Conformity. Nor did the melancholly Prospect of all those Hardships and Discouragements which were like to attend, the Exercise of his Ministry that way, (which so many Penal Laws were in force against) hinder him from devoting himself to the special Service of Christ in that sacred Profession. So that we are sure no worldly Motives or Considerations could be reasonably suppos'd to sway him in so self-denying a Choice. How long he preach'd as a Candidate of the Ministry in England, I cannot learn any certain Account || But in this Kingdom he was invited to succeed the Reverend Mr. How, as Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord Massareen at Antrim. It was in the time of his sacred Ministrations, in that Honourable and Religious Family, that he came up to this City to be solemnly ordain'd to the Ministerial Office, and return'd to his Station at Antrim, where he continued, for several Years, his Labours, there meeting with general Acceptance, and himself with deserved Esteem and Respect from all that knew him. During the Troubles of this Kingdom, he continu'd at Antrim after the Lord Massareen's removal to England; and was there, by the Popish Party, taken into Custody, and brought up a Prisoner to this City, on pretence of his corresponding with the Enemies of the Government. But tho' the Charge of this pretended Plot was groundless, there was a real wise Stratagem and Plot of Divine Providence in bringing him hither. For after six or seven Weeks Imprisonment, and several Examinations, nothing appearing against him, he was discharg'd. And having that Opportunity of preaching occasionally to this Congregation, he received and complied with a Call to the pastoral Charge of it, and has now for about fifteen Years been employed in it. How abundant and unwearied his Labours in this Christian Society were, you all very well know. And how cheerful and ready he was to give occasional Assistance to other Congregations, all my Brethren know, and have Reason thankfully to remember.

His Ministerial Abilities were truly valuable. He had laid up a rich stock of Divine and Human Know-

† Those Papers of his which probably would have been very useful to this purpose, were written in Characters.

|| Only it appears by his Papers, that he continued for several Years as Chaplain in the Earl of Radnor's Family.

ledge, as the Fruit of his studious younger Years. He had a very intimate Acquaintance with the Holy Scriptures, and well deserv'd the honourable Character given to one of this excellent Predecessors (the Reverend Dr. Harrison) that he was a *walking Bible*. From that inexhaustible Fund, his Mind was so enrich'd, and replenish'd with divine Wisdom, that he came forth as a *Scribe well instructed to the Kingdom of Heaven*, being able to bring forth out of his *Treasure Things new and old*, Mat. xiii. 52. suited to the various Exigencies of his Flock. He was a *Workman that need not be ashamed*, able to divide aright the Word of Truth, 2 Tim. ii. 15. and to give every one their Portion in due Season. His Gift of Prayer was their eminent and edifying. He had a marvellous enlargement of devout Affections, and copious fluency of suitable scriptural Expressions in that heavenly Exercise, and was thereby happily able to accommodate himself to the various Emergent Cases of his Congregation, and of particular Persons and Families. For his preaching, whatever there seem'd to want of Elevation of Voice, and Earnestness of Expression, was in a great Measure made up in the Solidity, the unaffected Seriousness and Gravity, and the flowing Plainness and Perspicuity, wherewith he was wont to deliver the Oracles of God. There was an Air of Solemnity and Reverence that appear'd in all his Holy Ministrations, and carried convincing Evidence into the Consciences of all that attended them, that he felt himself what he delivered to them, and that out of the abundance of his Heart his Mouth spake, Mat. xii. 34.

But what I wou'd chiefly insist on in his Character (and that agreeably to the Scope of the Text) is the admirable suitableness of his unblemish'd Holy Conversation to the Dignity of his Profession as a Minister, as well as a Christian. He was, in reference to his Works, as well as his Doctrine, a truly shining Light. If we trace his Conversation from the beginning to the end of it, we find the genuine Effects of that Divine Faith that was deeply rooted in his Heart, appearing in a truly exemplary Life.

The Grace of God had made Early Impressions on his Soul. He was himself, in his younger Years, *born from above*, and thereby prepared to be an happy Instrument of quickning dead Souls to spiritual Life. A little Book was, since his Death, found in his Study, wherein he had penn'd down that solemn Covenant, in which he had entirely devoted himself to the Service of God. And he did then also enter into pious Jacob's particular solemn Vow, that *whatever God shou'd bless him with, the tenth part shou'd be offer'd to him*, Gen. xxviii. 22. And some Circumstances render it very probable, that these Transactions pass'd between God and him when he was a Student. One of his Papers contains his Resolutions how to spend every Day. A good part thereof he allots to Reading, Meditation and Prayer; some part thereof he assigns to the Care of his Family, and particularly in reference to the Concerns of their Souls; and the Close of it he devotes to serious self Reflections. Nor were these Rules barely wrote down for Fashion Sake in a Book; No, they were imprinted on the Heart, and in a great Measure transcrib'd and copy'd out in his daily Conversation. And indeed very few have spent more Time in Holy Solitude, and have seem'd to converse more with God and their own Souls than he. This does, in part, appear by several of his Papers, which

contain such judicious and serious Observations on the Providence of God towards the Church in general, as well as towards himself and Family in particular, which he pen'd down in his Hours of Retirement. And it would probably have appear'd much more, if the Contents of most of his Papers had not been (by his excessive Modesty) lock'd up in an unknown Short-band.

There was a venerable Gravity join'd with a most affable Sweetness in his whole Behaviour, very remote from that frosty Levity on the one Hand, or that supercilious Moroseness on the other, that are both so unbecoming the sacred Function. By the one he drew the Respect, by the other the Love of all with whom he convers'd. His Mien and Deportment had a tincture of his Birth, and the good Breeding and Ingenious Conversation he had been us'd to, in the Honourable Families in which he had resided.

His Meekness was the more remarkable, because it enabled him to hold so strict a Reign, and so steady a Government over his Passions, even in Opposition to his natural Temper, which was warm enough. But that natural Warmth so rarely appear'd, as made many impute that calmness of Spirit to his Complexion, which was the remarkable Effect of Divine Grace.

His forwardness to do good, was rather beyond than short of his Ability. He was herein a true Follower of his blessed Master, *who went about doing good*. Acts x. 38. He was much more solicitous to lay up incorruptible Treasures in Heaven than corruptible ones on Earth; and no otherwise studied to grow rich than by being so in good Works.

He was a great Lover of Concord and Order, was always ready to pay a due deference to the Judgment of his Brethren, and seldom ever discover'd more of a warm Zeal than in opposing what he thought contrary thereto.

He had a true Spirit of Catholick Charity. His Love was far from being confin'd to a self-distinguish'd Party. He had a just dislike of the narrow Spirit of any that would engross the Name of the Church and of Christian Communion to themselves. He reckon'd Catholick Unity and Communion to lye in the Essentials of Christianity, not in human Additions to it. For himself, He could peaceably dissent from what he thought to be corruptions in a publick Establishment without renouncing his Charity to those whose Judgment led them to submit to it. And how much the Care of all the Churches lay upon his Heart, How extensive a Concern he had for the whole Protestant, nay the whole Christian Interest thro' the World, often appear'd in his particular warm Enlargement when he pray'd for them.

Thus did his divine Faith enable him to abound in all the Fruits of Universal Holiness. And he has (Blessed be God!) left his sacred Livery as a Christian, and his honourable Character as a Minister without the least observable Stain upon it. He may truly appeal to all of you as the Apostle Paul did to the Saints at Thessalonica, *Ye are Witnesses, and God also, how holily and justly and unblamably we have behav'd our selves among you that believe*. 1 Thess. ii. 10. His Name is as a precious Ointment that has diffus'd it's fragrant odour to all round about. There was none of that dead Fly (the Folly of Pride) that so often causes it to send forth a stinking savour. Eccl. x. 1. On the contrary, all his other eminent Virtues deriv'd a peculiar Lustre from (what might seem to draw a dark Veil over them)

* He had in the Rules he laid down for spending every Day particularly oblig'd himself to read several Chapters, both out of the Old and New Testament.

† He could not look on the late Writings of the Sach-ll's, the Lest-ll's and the Dade-ll's of the Age without lamenting the palpable Tendency of them to tear open those Wounds which all good Men wish the Healing of. He saw too visible Characters of a blind Malignity in them to think they cou'd proceed from that Wisdom which is from above, which is peaceable as well as pure, and full of mercy and good Fruits, not of bitterness and rancour, of unjust Revilings, and uncharitable Anathemas. But it was some Satisfaction to him, to observe a contrary Spirit of Charity and Moderation prevailing in others far more eminent for their Learning and Piety as well as Station and Character. And this alone gave him any Hope of that publick Blessing which he so often and so earnestly pray'd for, viz. The healing of our Divisions.

his great Humility. He was herein a true Disciple of that Blessed Saviour who was both meek and lowly in Heart. Mat. xi. 29. Those Gifts and Graces that enrich'd his Head and Heart did but cloth his Face with the deeper Blushes. And tho' with Moses his Face often shone to the observance of others, yet he himself knew it not. Exod. xxxiv. 29. And he shou'd be the Higher in our Esteem, for being so low in his own.

And his End was every way suitable to so blameless, so useful, and to exemplary a Conversation. For tho' his Distemper so insensibly wasted his Spirits, as to render speaking very uneasy to him, yet he spake enough to convince all that heard him, That his pious Sentiments and Dispositions were the same in his Sickness as in his Health. In the beginning and progress of his Distemper he frequently express'd an entire Resignation to the Will of God. And he would sometimes enquire of his Relations about him, Whether they thought he carried it with a becoming Reverence and Submission under his Hand. He would often urge them to pray for him, that he might not grow weary of his afflictions or repine at the long continuance of them. He frequently express'd his desires that he might live no longer than he could be useful in his Station. And as he would speak with great humility of his past defects, so he express'd strong Resolutions if God pleas'd to spare him for farther Service to be more earnest and laborious in his Work. And indeed in the last Sermon he Preach'd (which was on those remarkable Words. Jude 21 v. *Keep your selves in the Love of God, waiting for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus to Eternal Life*) I am told he appeared unusually affected to the surprize and wonder of his Hearers. What Veneration he had for that Blessed Saviour he discover'd when in answer to one of my Reverend Brethren that ask'd him what he now thought of him? He readily reply'd, *He is the chief of ten thousand and altogether lovely.* What comfortable expectations he had of his Mercy to Eternal Life, He often suggested, particularly enlarging to one of his Congregation that visited him, on the 2 Cor. i. 12. And on Job. i. 3. from v. 20. to the end; and declaring to him the inward Satisfaction he had in the conscience of his past sincerity towards God. (As he did also to my self a few Minutes before he expir'd.) And yet he look'd for the Mercy of our Lord Jesus to eternal Life. For as another of my Reverend Brethren (that convers'd with him on his Death-bed) informs me, "He found him abounding in ingenious self-condemning Reflections, abasing himself, and lessening his own performances with a very humble frame. Yet (saith he) I found him in no doubts about his own sincerity and the safety of his spiritual State." He said, *Death was not at all terrible in his Eye.* And he repeated those Words of Holy David, *The Lord hath made with me an everlasting Covenant in all Things well-ordered and sure, and this is all my Desire and all my Salvation,* and in repeating the last Clause, *This is all, &c.* He rais'd his Voice with a surprizing earnestness from one in his extremely weak and dying Condition. When his afflicted Consort and Children about his Bed, desir'd he would, if able, speak something to them, He answered, *I can hardly speak at all, But the Lord speak to you, The Lord comfort you and direct you, and Be all in all unto you.* In his very dying Moments when he was sinking apace under the weight of his Distemper, he complained of his dullness, and that he could not rouse up his Soul as he desired to do. But he express'd to the last his hope of that blessed Immortality he is now entred into.

Such was the Exemplary Conversation of your late Reverend Pastor, and such was the comfortable Close and End of it in this World.

But what the glorious Issue of it is in that blessed World he is now entred into, is what no words of mine can fully describe, nor your thoughts fully conceive; And what we shall then only clearly under-

stand when we meet with him again in the Kingdom of God. But yet so much of it we do know and should seriously contemplate, as may powerfully incite us to imitate his holy Faith and heavenly Conversation.

But before I shut up this Discourse I must crave leave to suggest a few Words to my Reverend Brethren, and to you of this Congregation.

All that I shall say to you, My Reverend Brethren, is, To be your humble and faithful Monitor, That you would also so remember this our deceased Brother, as to endeavour to equal or out do him in all those amiable Graces that rendred his holy Conversation such a convictive Evidence of the the Excellency of his divine Faith. And O how circumspect, how blameless, how shining and exemplary should our behaviour be, upon which the honour of Religion in the World so much depends, and the influence whereof upon those under our Pastoral Inspection is like to be so highly beneficial or pernicious! What need have we to look well to the regularity of our own Steps, whose Office 'tis to be Leaders and Examples to our Flocks! What care should we take to recommend our divine Faith with all possible Advantage by our holy and heavenly Conversation, when 'tis expected that all under our Ministerial Conduct should be Followers both of the one and the other! Did we only regard our own Interest and Name; It were but a commendable ambition to live so, as we may be remembered with affection and honour, and not with just contempt and disdain. But it should far more strongly oblige us to the utmost care of our Department, When we consider that the Glory of God, The Reputation of our holy Profession, The Edification of the Church, and the Salvation of those precious Souls that are committed to our Charge, is so highly concern'd in it. For the Influence of our present Conversation to promote or disserve these most valuable Interests may out-last our Funerals themselves. And our very Memory may (like the Gospel we Preach) be a quickning or killing savour to many that survive us. O let then our whole Lives (as well as our Ministerial Labours) be devoted to the Glory of God, and the good of Souls, that they may be fit to be propos'd when we are dead and gone, as a Pattern for the Imitation of others.

As to you that are Members of this Christian Society, I shall not repeat my Exhortation to you, To remember this your deceased Pastor, in order to your being Followers of his Faith. But I shall briefly suggest two or three Instances, wherein your affectionate Remembrance of him should shew itself, which tho' my Text does not directly mention, yet are too suitable to the present Occasion to be omitted.

1. Your affectionate Remembrance of your deceased Pastor should oblige you to shew all Respect to his afflicted Family.

'Tis mention'd by way of just Reproach to the Children of Israel, That they shew'd not kindness to the House of Jerub-baal or Gideon, according to all the kindness he had shew'd to Israel. Judg. 8. 35. The Consideration of that eminent Self-denial and Mortification to this World, and entire Neglect of seeking great Things for himself or Family in it, which your Pastor has shown, should the more effectually recommend to your tender Concern and Care those that are now destitute of his. And I may say to you, in allusion to the Language of Naomi, *The Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the Dead, and shall still deal with the Living.* 1 Ruth. 8.

2. Your affectionate Remembrance of your deceased Pastor should put you on earnest Prayers to God that he may provide for you a Pastor after his own Heart that may feed you with true Knowledge and Understanding.

And

And the great Lord of the Harvest send forth a faithful Labourer into this part of his Vineyard, under whose Cultivation, many Plants of Righteousness may spring up, and those that are planted may abound in all the Fruits of Holiness! We have reason when we see so eminent a Prophet taken away to cry out, *Where is the Lord God of Elijah* 2 Kings 11. 14? Let us then joyn in our earnest Prayers, to that God with whom the Residue of the Spirit is, that a double Portion of (this departed) *Elijah's Spirit* may rest upon the *Elisha*, whom God in his Providence shall call to fill up his Place.

3d. So remember your deceased Holy Guides as may dispose you the better to improve the Labours of such as shall succeed.

It cannot but be a grievous and afflictive Thought, to most of you to consider, that as to this faithful Servant of Christ, who (so long) went about among you preaching the Kingdom of God, you must now see his Face no more, Acts 20. 20. And perhaps few of you can look back on your Enjoying his Labours so long, without some self-condemning Reflexions upon your own unprofitableness under them. Alas, how do the most of our Hearers look like barren Trees that only cumber the Ground! O see then that your present want of a judicious and faithful Minister teach you to value such a one the more, and to make a more eminent

proficiency in divine Grace when you shall again enjoy the like happy Seasons of it. You find by your own sad experience, *That the Prophets do not live for ever*, Zach. 1. 5. Though the Treasure of divine Knowledge be incomparably precious, yet to our great regret 'tis put into Earthen Vessels. 2 Cor. 4. 5. that are quickly broken and dash'd in pieces. O walk then in the Light, while you enjoy the Light, Job. xii. 35. and while those Stars whom Christ holds in his right hand are allow'd by him to shine in this dark World. And O my Brethren, with what ardor or Zeal and Affection should we speak, and you bear the great things of God, if we could speak, as dying Creatures our selves to those that are dying and passing into an Eternal State, and did you bear as those that consider how soon we must speak, or you hear no more! And may we so speak, and you so bear, that our mutual Account may be joyful! That we may have our diligence and fidelity accepted, and you may appear as our Crown and Joy, being presented faultless before the divine Presence with exceeding Joy! And may both you and we so conspire in the same Holy Faith and Heavenly Conversation, that we may both partake of the same happy End and Issue of it in Eternal Glory! And then how Afflictive soever our Separation in this World may be, our meeting in a better will be unconceivably Joyful.





A Funeral

S E R M O N

On the Occasion of the DEATH of

WILLIAM CAIRNES, Esq;

(Who Dy'd *August 7th, 1707*)

Preach'd in *WOOD-STREET, Aug. 10.*

By *J. B.*



SERMON XXXVIII.

P S A L M, xxiii. 4, 5.

Yea tho' I walk thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet will I fear no Evil; For thou art with me, Thy Rod and thy Staff they comfort me.

THE Tidings of the Death of our Christian Relations and Friends, do of late like Job's Messengers, tread upon the Heels of one another. We have scarce dried our Eyes for one, but the Funeral of another calls for a fresh Tribute of our Tears. And sure this should awaken us all to some serious Reflections on this deplorable Calamity that our Nature is so unavoidably liable to, and some effectual Preparation for an Event which ye can no way shun. 'Tis a solemn and awful thing to dye. Death is such a dismal and gloomy Scene as we need the clearest Light of Divine Faith to dispel the Darknefs of. 'Tis such a violent and terrible Conflict that we need all the Patience and Fortitude, all the Courage and Confidence that true Religion can inspire, to carry us successfully thro' it. Our dying Moments are a Season wherein (if ever) Heart and Flesh will be ready to fail us, and wherein we shall need the richest Cordials that can be administred to support our fainting Spirits. And therefore 'tis a noble Effect of Revealed Religion, when it can enable a Saint that has all the Terrors of Death in his View, so far to triumph over them, as to say with the Psalmist, *tho' I walk thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet will I fear no Evil, &c.*

I shall not detain you from the Words by any needless Enquiry concerning the Pen-man of this Psalm, or the Time and Occasion of its Composition.

I shall only take Notice, that the Psalmist represents the Blessed God under a two-fold Notion.

The one of a compassionate Shepherd who had taken him into his tender Care, the other of a liberal Benefactor at whose Table he was entertain'd as a welcome Communicant and Guest.

The Psalmist in the verse foregoing considers him as a compassionate Shepherd, who had taken him into his tender Care. Sheep stand in need of green Pastures to feed them, and still Waters to refresh them. Both these he enjoy'd in God's sacred Institutions. Sheep stand in need of the Shepherd's Care to recover them from their Wandrings, and to guide them into those safe Paths that lead them to the Fold. So did he experience the Care of this divine Shepherd for restoring his wandering Soul, and conducting him in those Paths of Righteousness, that lead to the Heavenly Fold.

And whereas his Passage thither lay thro' that gloomy Vale where Death casts a black and dismal Shade, he here calls up his Faith to check and controul his Fears, and from the Contemplation of the divine Presence with him, for his Protection and Conduct encourages himself to walk thro' it with unshaken Confidence and Trust.

From the Words then, we may observe two things for our present Instruction and Improvement.

I. The Passage of good Men themselves to the Mansions of Light and Life, lyes thro' the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death.

II. 'Tis the Contemplation and Belief of God's gracious Presence with us, and his powerful Protection and Conduct that must enable a dying Saint to go through that dark Passage, not only without Fear, but with Confidence and Comfort.

I shall speak something to each of these Observations, and then apply them to the present Occasion.

I. The Passage of a Saint to the Mansions of Light and Life, lies through the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death.

In speaking hereto, I shall briefly consider, First, How significantly Death is represented under the Emblem of a shady or dark Valley.

Secondly, I shall vindicate the Conduct of Divine Providence in the unavoidable Necessity it has lay'd on all, even on good Men themselves, to pass thro' this Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Thirdly, I shall shew, that yet the Psalmist does here suppose it to be the Passage to a better Life.

First, I shall consider, How significantly and elegantly Death is represented under the Emblem of a dark or shady Valley.

Now Death is very elegantly represented under this Emblem, partly to intimate to us, that Death is in it self the greatest temporal Calamity that can befall our Nature, and partly to intimate our natural Dread of it, and Aversion to it.

I. Death is elegantly represented under this Emblem to intimate, That 'tis in it self the most deplorable Temporal Calamity that can befall our Nature.

Nothing is more usual in Scripture than to describe a Scene of deep Affliction and Misery under the Emblem of Darknefs, and a State of Prosperity and Joy under the Emblem of Light. And 'tis because no Condition looks in it self more frightful and disconsolate than our dying Moments, that the greatest of other Dangers and Miseries are often call'd the Shadow of Death. (see Ps. cvii. 10, 14 v.) And because there is such a gloomy Darknefs peculiarly observable in solitary Valleys that are overshadowed by high Mountains, this also adds a farther Emphasis to the Phrase, to import the depth and extremity of Distress, in which there appears little hope of Relief.

All this plainly intimates to us, that Death is of all others the most disconsolate and calamitous Scene. And so it is indeed, if we look upon it with an Eye of Sense.

Death

Death utterly extinguishes the *Light of Life*, and puts an end to all the *Enjoyments* and *Comforts* thereof. It closes our *Eyes* upon this visible World, and upon all the *Things of Sense and Time*. It violently disseizes us of all our *Earthly Possessions and Estates*, and sends us as *naked out of this World as we came into it*. It casts a *dark Shade* over all the *Pomp and Glory* of our *External Condition*, and tramples our idolized *Honours* in the *Dust*. It levels all the *vain Distinctions* upon which we are here so prone to value ourselves. Death hurries us off from the *Stage of Publick Action and Business*, and confines us to that *dark Prison and Cell*, where those that a while ago made such a *figure and bustle* in the *World*, are locked up in the profound *silence and sleep* of the *Grave*, out of which nothing but the *sound of the last Trumpet* can awaken them. Death forcibly rends and tears us out of the *Embraces* of our dearest *Relations and Friends*, and sends us as *melancholy Recluses* to that place of *solitude*, where (as *Hezekiah speak*) *Is. xxxviii. 11. We shall behold Man no more with all the Inhabitants of the World*. Nay the *Places that know us on Earth* shall know us no more. Death puts an end to our *State of Trial*, and to all our *Capacities and Opportunities* of *Receiving or Doing good*. Death is the visible *Destruction* of our compounded *Nature*. It defaces that noble *stamp* that our *Clay* had receiv'd from the *divine Potter* when we were by him *curiously form'd in the lower parts of the Earth*. It dissolves this beautiful *Tabernacle and Mansion* of our *Outward Man*, so that the *indwelling Spirit* can animate and act in it no more: Of that *active and sprightly Creature* which we beheld a while before, (so full of busy *Thoughts*, so big with various projects and designs, and so industrious in the prosecution of them) Death leaves nothing in our view, but a *breathless and lifeless Lump* devoid of all *Sense and Motion*, an *hideous and ghastly*, and very soon a *noisom and offensive Spectacle* which we are oblig'd to bury out of our *Sight*. Such visible *Contempts* does Death pour upon *humane Nature*; such a *dark and black Cloud* does it draw over all the present *Beauty* of it, rendring those very *Objects* the *Aversion*, that were a while ago the *Desire* of our *Eyes*.

And well may such a *melancholly Scene* as this be compar'd to a *Dark and Gloomy Valley*. But farther,

2. Death is significantly represented under this *Emblem* to intimate our *natural Dread* of it and *Aversion* to it.

We cannot enter into any very *dark and gloomy Place* without some kind of *Horror* and *Affrightment*. And no wonder then that we feel such unusual *Commotions* and *tremblings* of *Nature*, when we are call'd to walk thro' this *dark Valley of the Shadow of Death*, Death so far as we look upon it with an *Eye of Sense*, has a *grim and ghastly Aspect*, at which our *Nature* is apt to shrink and start back. If we look to the *Harbingers* that go before this *King of Terrors* we cannot think of those *racking Pains* and *Violent Convulsions* and *bitter Agonies* that usually usher in the *final Dissolution* of oppressed *Nature*, without *Amazement* and *Terror*. Nay if we look beyond Death itself, to that *Unseen State* that our departing *Souls* must enter into, where they know so little of the *Place* of their future *Eternal Abode*, or of the *manner* how they shall *Subsist* and *Act*, How does the *Obscurity* and *Darkness* thereof make a considerable *Addition* to the *natural Terrors* of Death? We cannot think without some *anxious and awful Concern* of our *Souls* passing into such an *Invisible World* where (as one well expresses it) *they shall be they know not what, and Live they know not how*. And if we add to all this, How much the *consciousness* of our own *Guilt*, the *awful Solemnity* of a future *impartial Judgment*, and the *infinite Importance* of the *eternal Issues* of it, tends to heighten our *Fears*, We may well conceive that Death is in itself a most *gloomy and frightful Scene*. 'Tis often so to *Good-Men* themselves when they

look only on the *Dark Side* of it. As we may see by the *mournful Complaint* of pious *Hezekiah*. (See *Is. xxxviii. from v. 10 to the 15th.*) Nay how often do the loud *Groans* of our dying *Friends* give us a sensible *Conviction* what *bitter Anguish* they feel when those intimate *Associates* of *Soul and Body* suffer a *violent Divorce*, and are forcibly torn from one another. 'Tis true indeed how this *Union* between *Soul and Body* is dissolved, We can no more tell than how it was at first made. How an *Immortal Mind* should be so nearly ally'd and link'd to an *organized Clod* of *Earth*, in order to it's present *Sensations* and *Motions* we cannot conceive. And we know a little how the *unwelcome Separation* is made. None of those *numberless Spirits* that are gone before us ever return'd to tell us, *What it is to dye*. All that we know is, That Death does usually in its near Approaches offer so much *Violence* to our *Nature* as to justify its being called our *last Enemy*. The *Separation* of *Soul and Body* is not ordinarily effected without some *sharp Conflict* and *painful Struggle*. Those *dolorous Pangs* of Death do evidently proclaim our *natural Reluctancy* to it. We cannot look upon them in their near Approaches without something of the like *Horror*, as the *Passenger* does on those boisterous *Winds and Waves* that every *Moment* threaten to *tear and stave* the weak *Vessel* in pieces. And no wonder that such a *black and tempestuous Scene* as this should appear *dismal and terrible* to our *frail Nature*.

Having thus shewn How fitly Death is represented to us under this *Emblem* of a *dark and shady Valley*,

I now proceed,

Secondly, To vindicate the *Conduct* of *divine Providence* in the unavoidable *Necessity* it has laid upon all, even upon *good Men* themselves to pass thro' this *dark Valley of the Shadow of Death*.

In order thereto, I shall only briefly suggest these two *Things*.

1. This is necessary for the *Demonstration* of *God's impartial Justice* against *Sin*.

We learn from *supernatural Revelation*, That Death is not the necessary *Result* of our *Natural Constitution*, but the just *Punishment* of *Sin*. Had *Man* retain'd his *primitive Innocence* he would have been rewarded with a *blessed Immortality*. It was upon *Sin's* entrance into the *World*, That Death also (with all it's train of *Diseases and Pains, Afflictions and Miseries*) made it's *Way and Passage* into it, rendring it such a *Vale of Tears and Scene of Woe*. It was the *Corruption* of our *Nature* that has entail'd this *Curse of Mortality* upon it, and subjected us to this *deplorable*, but yet *inevitable necessity* of *Dying*. And indeed Nothing less than the *Defacing his own Moral Image* could provoke a *gracious God* thus to *destroy the Workmanship* of his own *Hands*.

Now it highly tends to render the *impartial Equity* of *divine Justice* the more conspicuous in the *Eye* of the *World*, That the *Empire of Death* should be as *Universal* as that of *Sin* has been. That as all have sinned, so Death should without *Exception* pass upon all. *Rom. v. 12*. So that as often as these *Spectacles of Mortality* are presented to our *Eye*, so often do we see a *convincing Instance* of *God's abhorrence* of *Sin* and *severity* against it. The *Malignity* and *Demerit* of *Sin* is even here legibly engraven on those *Ruines* it has brought upon our *Nature*. And 'tis for the *Glory* of *divine Justice* that this *righteous Sentence* of Death should take Place upon all the *defiled Race* of *Apostate Adam*; That where-ever this *hateful Leprosy* has spread, the *Walls* of this *House of Clay* should be pull'd down.

2. This *Conduct* of *divine Providence* is highly conducive to the *Glory* of his *infinite Wisdom*.

And this will appear if we consider,

This *Animal Life* is only suited to this *State of Probation and Trial*.

And

And therefore 'tis congruous to the Wisdom of God that it should be utterly *extinguish'd by Death*. For the glorious Rewards that divine Grace has now set before us, are too great to be enjoy'd, while our Souls are confin'd to such *Earthly Bodies* as these. Our present *weak and frail Nature* is not capable of bearing the strong *Impression* of divine and heavenly Objects. We cou'd not see God and live. Exodus. xxxiii. 20. We must be rais'd to an *higher and angelical Life* to fit us for the possession of those *supernatural Glories*. We must have *Spiritualized Bodies* to prepare us for the consummate Happiness of the *Resurrection State*. We must therefore lay down these *Earthly Bodies* which are only accommodated to this lower World, and that part we are to act in it while we are under *Trial* for the important *Retributions* of another State and Life.

Again, 'Tis congruous to the Wisdom of God, that we should glorify him by the Exercise of our divine Faith in Dying as well as Living.

We do indeed glorify God when we live by Faith. When we can so far trust his Word and Promise for the Glories of an *Unseen State*, as to prosecute the hopes of it by patient Continuance in well doing, and to reject the most tempting Objects of this World that stand in competition with it. But we no less Glorify God when we dye in Faith; When we can with an unshaken confidence pass thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, from the believing prospect of those *Mansions of Light* that are beyond it; When we can cheerfully commend our departing Spirits into the Hands of a merciful Saviour, and even commit our Bodies themselves to the Dust, from the assured hope of their Resurrection to a Glorious Immortality; When we can say as holy Job, *Tho' he slay me, I will trust in him.* Job xiii. 15. v.

Let me only add, That 'tis no Impeachment of the Goodness of God, That Good Men themselves must thus pass thro' the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death. Because (as I shall shew afterwards) all that is truly formidable in Death is as to them remov'd. To them it's Sting and Terror is taken away. Nay, towards them, Death has a friendly Aspect, and comes upon a kind Errand and Design. To them 'tis the Passage into the Regions of Light. To them 'tis no considerable Loss, but what is outweigh'd by incomparably greater Gain. And this Consideration is sufficient even to vindicate the Goodness as well as Wisdom of God in Exposing Good Men themselves to this unavoidable Necessity of Dying. But this leads me,

Thirdly, To shew, That the Psalmist does here suppose Death to be the Passage to a better Life.

For without this Supposition, he could never have reasonably said, That he would fear no Evil, when he walked thro' this Valley of the Shadow of Death. For if Death carried with it an utter and perpetual Extinction of our Being; If we should forego this Life without any prospect of a better, Death would be the most formidable Evil, against which there would be no possible Remedy or Relief. And not to fear it, on this Supposition, would be the most unreasonable Stupidity. Such black Thoughts as these were enough to sink a confidant dying Saint into absolute Despair, and to make him cry out in the Psalmist's Language, *Wherefore hast thou made all Men in vain?* Ps. Lxxxix. 46. The Psalmist therefore had no such uncomfortable Apprehensions as these when he tells us, *That tho' he walk'd thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, yet would he fear no Evil.* But this leads me to the

Second Observation from the Words viz. 'Tis the Contemplation and Belief of God's gracious presence with him for his Protection and Conduct, that must enable a dying Saint to go thro' this Valley of the Shadow of Death, not only without fear, but with confidence and Comfort.

In speaking to this Observation from the Words, I shall,

First, Consider the Grounds here suggested of the Confidence and Comfort of a dying Saint.

Secondly, I shall shew, That the Lively Contemplation and Belief of them will carry a dying Saint with such fearless confidence and comfort thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death.

First, I shall consider the Grounds here suggested of the Confidence and comfort of a dying Saint.

And these the Psalmist represents to us in those Words, *For thou art with me, And thy Rod, and thy Staff they comfort me.*

Now we may reduce the Grounds of his Confidence to these two Heads.

1. God's gracious Presence with him in his dying Moments.

2. His merciful Disposal and Conduct of him after Death.

1. God's gracious Presence with him in his dying Moments.

And indeed We never do more need the special Presence of God, than when we are call'd to pass thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death. We then (if ever) need the Light of his Countenance, to scatter those perplexing Fears, which the Consciousness of our own Guilt is apt to create. We have then great occasion for the sense of our comfortable Peace with God to maintain the inward Tranquility and Peace of our own Minds, when we feel such a violent Commotion and Storm in our Outward Man, When (to allude to the Words of the Psalmist) Deep calls unto Deep, And the Waves and Billows of affliction are continually rolling over us. Ps. xlii. 7. We then stand in need of divine Consolations to support our Spirits from sinking under the pressure and load of Bodily Infirmities. We then need his quickning and confirming Grace to invigorate our divine Faith and Hope, that our inward Man may be renew'd as our outward Man does decay. We then need his powerful Protection and Defence, when we may expect the most furious Assaults of our Spiritual Enemies, and are most unable to repel them. The Wolves were wont to set upon the Sheep when they found them in such solitary Valleys, and they then need the Shepherds staff to defend them from such ravenous Beasts.

And a dying Saint has great Encouragement to depend on this gracious reviving, supporting, protecting Presence of God in his last Moments. He may then plead his Interest in those gracious Promises, *That God will never leave nor forsake him.* Deut. xxxi. 8. *That he will be his God and Guide unto Death.* Psalm. xlviii. 14. *That when Flesh and Heart fail, God will be the strength of his Heart, and his Portion for evermore.* Ps. lxxiii. 26. And 'tis the Persuasion of this gracious Presence of God with him in a dying Hour, that fortifies him against his despondent Fears, and replenishes his Soul with comfort and light, when all Things else look dark and dismal about him.

But there is a farther Ground of his Confidence, viz.

2. God's gracious Disposal and Conduct of him after Death.

Tho' he walks thro' the dark and Shady Vale of Death, he sees this compassionate Shepherd of Souls as it were going before him, and leading him the way to that Blessed Fold where he shall enjoy both safety and Rest. And the sight of his Pastoral Staff, the Consideration of being under his wise and merciful Conduct, encourages and emboldens him to tread in his Steps, being assur'd, That how dark soever the Passage may be, yet it will lead to the Mansions of Light. He is therefore freely willing to follow so sure and faithful a Guide, believing the Truth of what he has told us, *That he knows his Sheep, and will give them Eternal Life, and None shall pluck them out of his Hands.* Job. x. 28. A dying Saint is fully persuaded, That he can never finally miscarry under the vigilant, and tender care of the great Shepherd of Souls. The believing Sight of him, and assurance of his Protection and Guidance confirms him in his confident Expectation

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of an happy Issue. He has already pass'd under his Rod, and has been numbred among his chosen, and therefore has the comfortable Persuasion of being admitted into his heavenly Fold.

Now such as these being the Grounds of the Confidence of a dying Saint, I proceed,

Secondly, to shew, That the lively Contemplation and Belief of God's gracious Presence and his powerful Protection and Conduct will carry a Saint thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death, not only without fear, but with Confidence and Comfort.

And the Truth hereof will appear if we consider,

1. That to such a one there is nothing very Terrible in Death.

If there be any thing Terrible in Death, 'Tis either those Agonies and Pains that are the Forerunners of it, Or the apprehension of it's awful Consequences in a future State.

A true Saint has no reason to be affrighted at those Agonies and Pains that are the usual Forerunners of Death; Because the Presence of God with him does assure him of all needful supports in a dying Hour. Nay, he need not fear the Malice of his Spiritual Enemies when he is under the Protection and Care of the great Shepherd of the Sheep; And Greater is he that is in him than he that is in the World. 1 Job. iv. 4.

And for the awful Consequences of Death in a future State, he is happily secur'd against them. The Apostle Paul tells us, That the sting of Death is Sin, And the strength of Sin is the Law. 1 Cor. xv. 56. i. e. 'Tis the unpardon'd Guilt of Sin exposing us to the Eternal Vengeance of God that renders the thoughts of Death so grievous and terrible. And Sin derives it's condemning Power from the Threatnings of God's violated Law. But now this sting of Death is taken away, when the Guilt of Sin is cancell'd by an Act of gracious Absolution and Forgiveness; When the Curse of the Law is repeal'd, and to us that are in Christ Jesus there is no Condemnation. Those therefore need not fear any destructive Evil in Death, who can in their dying Moments look up to God not as an Avenging Judge but as a reconciled Father, and who can regard Death itself not as the beginning of their Sorrows but as the happy End of them. To them Death is like a Serpent that has lost it's Poyson. 'Tis a disarmed Enemy. Those that have no ground for any fearful Apprehensions of a future Judgment, have no Reason to entertain any terrifying Thoughts of Death.

2. Such a dying Saint has so comfortable a Prospect beyond Death as is sufficient to relieve him against the anxious Fears of it.

Even when he is Entering into this Valley of the Shadow of Death, he can by Faith look forward to a glorious and blessed Eternity.

As to his departing Soul, he can with humble Affiance commend it into the Hands of that compassionate Saviour, who has redeem'd it by his precious Blood. And in reference to the Interests of this his nobler Part, Death will make so desirable and happy a Change as may justly represent it to be his greatest Advantage and Gain. His Soul indeed must now quit this Earthly Tabernacle, But 'tis in order to it's Entrance into an House not made with Hands Eternal in the Heavens. 2 Cor. v. 1. It must be absent from the Body, but it's in order to it's being for ever present with the Lord. 2 Cor. v. 5, 6. A dying Saint must indeed leave his Earthly Relations and Friends behind; But 'tis only to Exchange their Society for the more desirable Converse of an Innumerable Company of Angels, and the Spirits of just Men made perfect. Death gives him the joyful Prospect of an happy Translation from a Vale of Tears and Darknes to the Mansions of Joy and Light; from a tedious Warfare to a glorious Triumph; from a wearisome Pilgrimage to sweet and everlasting Rest; from a State of Sinful Imperfection to a State of spotless Purity; from a World full of Ignorance and Malignity, and Wickedness, to that World above, where shining Light and per-

fect Love, where sinless Innocence and unallayed Happiness reign for ever. And who would be affrighted at the Thoughts of dying, that has so full assurance of being an unspeakable Gainer by it? Who would stand shivering and trembling on the brink of Jordan that sees the blessed Land of Promise on the other Side? Who would be afraid of this dark Valley that can look beyond it, to those bright and lucid Regions which 'tis the Entrance into? Who would be affrighted at the short, tho' stormy Passage, that foresees he shall land safe on the peaceful Shore of Eternity?

Nay, as to his Body itself, A dying Saint does not lay it down without comfortable Hope, He can commit his Dust to the Guardianship of that Blessed Saviour, who was himself the first Fruits of them that sleep, who by the Resurrection of his own Body has consecrated ours to a Blessed Immortality. And as he has actually promis'd to raise them at the last Day, and to fashion them like to his own glorious Body, so he can easily effect it by that mighty Power, whereby he is able to subdue all Things to himself. He can freely deposit his Flesh in the silent Grave as a safe Dormitory, where it shall rest in Hope. He foresees that Blessed Time, when it shall be rais'd from thence with unspeakable Advantage, when this corruptible, must put on Incorruption, and this Mortal, put on Immortality, and Death shall then be swallowed up in Victory. And in the joyful prospect thereof, He can even now triumph over Death, and say, O Death, where is thy Sting! O Grave where is thy Victory. But thanks be to God, which gives us the Victory thro' our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54, 55, &c. And who would fear Death even when it seems to seize these natural (or animal) Bodies as it's Prey, when they shall so soon be rescued from it's Power, and transform'd into spiritual Bodies, suited to the noblest Operations of our perfect Souls, and to all the nobler Uses of the Resurrection State?

It now remains, That we improve this Subject. Does then the passage of a Saint to the Mansions of Light lie thro' the Valley of the Shadow of Death? And is it the Contemplation and Belief of God's gracious presence with us for our Protection and Conduct, that must enable a dying Saint to go thro' that dark Passage, not only without Fear, but with Confidence and Comfort? Then,

I. We may hence see the Excellency of revealed Religion, that alone can furnish us with such solid Supports against the Terrors of Death.

The wisest of the Heathen Moralists were very sensible, That Death is one of those unavoidable and terrible Evils which the Mind of Man has the greatest need of being supported against the Fears of. And therefore they set their Thoughts at work to suggest the most powerful Considerations for their Relief. But alas! 'tis easy to observe, how little they could offer that was capable to fortify the Mind of a considerate Man, against the Terrors of Death, thro' their own utter Uncertainty concerning a future Life. Methinks when I hear such a Man as Socrates, even in his last Moments, speaking thus to his Friends about him, "I must speedily die, but you shall continue to live; " But who shall be in better Circumstances, you or " I, is uncertain to every one but God alone. When I observe him professing, that he knew not, Whether Death would be Good or Evil to him, and qualifying all his seeming Hopes of a life to come with so frequent Protestations, that he had only some probable Grounds to build it upon. When I find such a Man as Cicero bringing in his aged and wise Cato, as comforting himself against Death with this Consideration, That " Either his Soul was Immortal (which he was most " willing to believe, tho' he should be mistaken in it) " Or that if it be not Immortal, 'Tis, at least, desirable for a Man, in his proper time, to be extinguished. " When I observe Cicero himself professing his Discourse concerning the Soul's Immortality, by declaring, That he had nothing but Probabilities, and plausible

plausible Conjectures to offer on that Subject: When I hear such a Man as Seneca, in a dangerous Sickness, supporting himself against the Fears of Death with this sorry Consideration, That Death would put him in the same Condition that he was in before he was born; That Man is like a Candle, in no worse state after 'tis put out, than before 'tis lighted: When I find him using the like Argument to comfort Marcia upon the Death of her Son, That Death is nothing, and reduces all Things to nothing, and therefore delivers us up to no Fortune, So that he cannot be miserable who is no longer at all. When I hear such a Man as Plutarch, speaking of a certain Place appointed for virtuous Souls, as a bare Probability, and telling his Friend Appollonius, That either it was so, Or, at least, Death could be no Evil, since it would entirely extinguish all Sense and Life; and to add no more, When I observe such Men as Epictetus and Antoninus speaking so dubiously, Whether Death was an Extinction or Transmigration of human Souls? When, I say, I reflect on such Passages as these, methinks the Consolations they offer to a dying Man are as dark and cold as the Grave, and more capable to damp and chill than raise and animate their Hopes. And O what an invaluable Mercy do we enjoy, that are not left to so woful Uncertainties and blind Conjectures as these! What a noble and glorious Effect of the Gospel is it, That the meanest sincere Christian has far clearer Apprehensions of the Nature and Duration of a Future State of Happiness, and can die with incomparably more satisfying Assurance of it, than the greatest Sages of the heathen World could ever attain unto? And O how different is their Language from that of those Saints, who have dy'd in the vigorous Exercise of divine Faith! How different from that of the Psalmist in my Text, *The I walk thro' the Valley of the shadow of Death, Yet will I not fear; For thou art with me, and thy Rod and Staff they comfort me*! How different from that of pious Job, *I know that my Redeemer lives, and that he shall stand at the latter day on the Earth, and tho' after my Skin, Worms destroy this Body, yet in my Flesh shall I see God*, Job xix. 25, 26, 27, &c. How different from that of our dying Saviour, *Father, into thy hands I commend my Spirit*, Luke xxiii. 46. Or from that of his expiring Martyr, *Lord Jesus receive my Spirit*! Acts vii. 59. How different from that of the blessed Apostle, *I am in a strait between two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better, And, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*, Phil. i. 21, 23. Nay, how different from that which he ascribes to all true Christians, *We are confident and willing to be absent from the Body and present with the Lord*, 2 Cor. v. Ch. viii. 5.

And truly when I consider this remarkable difference between the Language of the wisest Philosophers and that of dying Believers, I cannot think without just Indignation of the Deists of the Age, that would persuade us to prefer the pretended Oracles of Reason to the living Oracles of God, even to that blessed Gospel itself, that has brought Life and Immortality to Light! Alas! what solid Relief could their uncertain Probabilities yield against the Terrors of Death, in comparison of that which a true Saint finds in the satisfying Persuasion of God's gracious presence with him, to support him under the Agonies of Death, and to conduct him to the Mansions of eternal Light and Life! Let me then dye the Death of a sincere Believer, and let my last End be like his! Let others go for Comfort to their pagan Oracles, but let us say to our Blessed Saviour, in the Language of Peter, *Whither should we go, for thou hast the words of Eternal Life*, John vi. 68.

Nay, We may here see, how different a thing the rational Confidence of a good Man in encountering Death, is from that seeming fearlessness of it that natural Courage inspires. 'Tis one thing to rush boldly upon Death in the heat of Blood, or to bear up against it with that Obstinacy and Fool-hardiness of Mind, that is only

the Effect of our stupid Inconsideration of the awful Consequences of it. But 'tis a quite different thing to die as a Saint; To have Death with all its gloomy Circumstances, and all its important Issues in our View, and yet to go without Fear, nay, with Comfort and Joy thro' that dark Passage, not from any Confidence in our own natural firmness of Mind, but from the persuasion of God's gracious presence for our support, and from a joyful Prospect of what we see beyond the Grave in a glorious and happy Immortality. Thus to die is the admirable Effect of divine Faith. And the Consideration hereof, should possess us with an high Veneration for that divine Revelation that has furnish'd our Faith with such solid grounds of confidence and comfort as these.

II. We may hence infer, *What solid Comfort it administers to us concerning our deceased Relations and Friends, when we see them passing through the Valley of the Shadow of Death in such triumphs of divine Faith and Hope.*

And this just ground of Consolation we have in reference to this our Christian Brother, whose Funeral is the mournful Occasion of this Discourse.

He was One on whom the Advantages of pious Education had made an early and deep Impression. Those holy Principles which he had imbib'd in his tender years, happily preserv'd him from all the Temptations he was expos'd to in a popish Kingdom, where the barbarous Cruelties that he was an Eye-witness of, serv'd only to confirm him in a just Abhorrence of the Principles of that degenerate Sect, that would so ridiculously engross the Name of the Catholick Church to themselves. During his Settlement in this Kingdom, he has been for many Years an useful Member of this Christian Society, and an exemplary bright Ornament to his Profession in it. And tho' his Industry was remarkably succeeded by Divine Providence in acquiring a considerable Estate, Yet his untainted Justice and Integrity in the management of his Affairs, have left no room for Malice itself to fasten the least Reflection upon him of having us'd any unfair or unlawful Arts of raising himself. Nor did the multiplicity of his secular Affairs exclude the regular Exercises of Devotion in his Closet or his Family. His Piety was solid, without any Appearance of Vain-glory and Ostentation, tho' always attended with the Marks of an awful Reverence for the divine Majesty. And tho' he stedfastly adher'd to the uncorrupted Simplicity and Purity of the Christian Religion as profess'd in the Protestant Dissenting Churches in this Kingdom, yet his Moderation and cordial Charity towards all good Protestants was manifest to all that convers'd with him. His Charity was by no means confin'd to the narrow limits of a Party. He impartially lov'd all that love our Lord Jesus in sincerity. He well understood wherein true Christianity did consist, and could easily distinguish between that and unnecessary human Additions to it. He valued himself much more on that common Title of a Christian, than on any particular distinguishing Denomination. He knew, *That the Kingdom of God stands not in meats and drinks, but in Righteousness, and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghost.* And that whoever in these things serveth Christ is accepted of God, and ought to be approv'd and esteem'd of all good Men. He had a deep Concern for the Interest of the Reformed Religion abroad, and was sensibly affected with Joy or Grief according to the prospect that the Affairs abroad gave of the Advancement, or Declension of it. He had a true Zeal for the civil Interests of this Kingdom, and a Heart dispos'd to improve any Opportunities that occur'd for the Service and Advantage of it. He was, upon all Occasions, ready to do good and to communicate. His liberal and forward Contributions for the Encouragement of every good Design that needed his assistance (and especially of every thing that carried in it the appearance of a publick good) are no inconsiderable Evidences of the

largeness of his Heart, and the generous Desire he had to be useful in the World. And as he gave many convincing Proofs of such a charitable and pious temper upon the several Occasions that occurred to him during his Life, so the ample and lasting Provision that is made by his Will for the maintenance of a Free-School at Monaghan, and the Legacies he has left to the Hospital and Poor-house in this City, together with some Instances of private Charity towards the Poor of his own Communion, do deserve to be recorded as an Honourable Memorial for him after his Death, in as much as they shew that he was under the Conduct of that Wisdom from above, which as it is full of mercy and good fruits, so it is also without partiality.

And blessed be God, his comfortable Death was suitable to the regularity of his sincere and upright Life. He went through the Trials of a long and painful Sickness, but was never heard to utter any repining Thought against the Providence of God in that severe and tedious Visitation. In those wearisome Nights which he so often spent without sleep, he was usually wont to solace and refresh himself by that heavenly Exercise of singing Psalms, (such as the 38th, 39th, 88, and 90th.) He wou'd, to the same End, often repeat other large Portions of the holy Scripture, as particularly the 12th Chapter to the Hebrews, and the 13th Chapter of the 1st Epistle to the Corinthians. Upon the approach of his violent Pains, he was often wont to beg of God, *That he would not leave him, and that he might not, in his Extremity, speak unadvisedly with his Lips.* He would often in his Agonies utter his ingenuous Affiance in God in the noble strain of holy Job, *Tho' he slay me, yet will I trust in him.* He was deeply sensible from his own Experience, of the Vanity of the World, and would often inculcate that Lesson on all that were about him. His own particular Case was a clear Demonstration of that important Truth, *That Man at his best Estate is altogether Vanity,* since the World signify'd so little to him, when his Affairs in it seem'd brought to the most desirable Settlement. But his Heart was so entirely disingag'd from it, that he seem'd little affected with the Hopes that his Friends at any time had of his Recovery, and would say on that Occasion, *Must I then return again to the World to sin anew? Lord forbid, But not my Will, but thine be done.*

But when his outward Man began sensibly to decline, his inward Man was remarkably renew'd in the vigorous Exercises of his divine Faith and Hope. And it was highly edifying to all those that were present with him in several of his dying Agonies, to hear him, not in the least regretting his departure out of this World, but expressing the most ardent Desires of his speedy translation to a better. He often cry'd out with great Earnestness, *Come blessed Saviour, Receive me to the Joys that are above, To thee I commend my departing Spirit, Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.* O why is thy coming so long delay'd? But, Lord, forgive my impatience. Being ask'd, *Whether Death was now terrible to him?* He answer'd, *That it was not, and that his Blessed Saviour had given him those Visions of a future Glory that made him long for the possession of it, and would (he hop'd) support him while he walked thro' the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death.* And I cannot but particularly observe, That after several dying Pangs seem'd to have sunk his Natural Spirits, he, of a sudden, surpriz'd all about him by singing the 23 Psalm throughout, with a clear and tunable Voice, and with great appearance of inward Comfort and Joy, from the suitability of it to his present Condition. And I the rather take notice of this Passage, because it determin'd my Thoughts to the choice of this Text as the Subject of the present Discourse.

And sure, my Brethren, 'tis an encouraging and comfortable sight to behold a sincere Christian thus exulting over Death, as a disarm'd Enemy (as himself call'd it when he saw its near approach) from the joyful

prospect of an happy Victory over it: Thus commending his Soul into the Hands of his gracious Redeemer, from a lively Faith in him as the Lord of the invisible World, who has the Keys of Death, and of the unseen State, who has himself encountered Death, and therefore knows what Supports we need in a dying Hour: Thus vehemently longing to depart and to be with him, and crying out (as he did) *Why are thy Chariot-wheels so long a coming?* Such a Sight as this should carry powerful Convictions into our Minds, That the great things of the invisible World are glorious and substantial Realities: That Divine Faith is no vain Fancy, but a solid Principle capable to conquer the Temptations of Life, and to vanquish the Terrors of Death.

And for such deceased holy Relations and Friends, they may justly bespeak those of us that survive, in the Language of our Saviour to the Daughters of Jerusalem, *Weep not for me, but weep for your selves.* The Apprehensions of their greater Gain should alleviate the sense of our Loss, and while we most sensibly lament their absence, we should not forget to rejoice, *That they are gone to the Father,* Joh. xiv. 28. But,

III. Let us learn hence, to familiarize the Thoughts of Dying, and prepare for such a fearless and comfortable Passage thro' this dark Valley of the Shadow of Death.

Let us learn to familiarize the Thoughts of Dying.

Let us often descend in our serious Meditations into this Gloomy Vale, thro' which our Passage to the Heavenly Fold lies. The more frequently we converse with it in our own Thoughts, the more sensibly will the Terrors of it be abated, and our Minds will be the better fortified against them. 'Tis our stupid Inconsideration of Death that often renders it's Coming the more surprizing and terrible. And sure we should be most inexcusable, if we that are surrounded with so innumerable Monitors of Death, should not remember *That we must dye.* Shall we that so often tread upon the Dust of former Generations, forget that we our selves must go the way of all Flesh? Shall none of the daily Spectacles of Mortality we behold, remind us of our own? Shall the Darkeness and Silence of the Night never make us think of the Obscurity and Silence of the Grave? Shall we that so often unloath our selves, forget how soon we must put off these Mortal Bodies themselves. Shall the withering Plants and Flowers, we so often look upon, never read us an instructive Lecture concerning the Instability and shortness of human Life? Shall we that see so many drop and fall on our Right-hand, and our Left (and some of them far more likely to have surviv'd us) never once consider, *That our Turn may quickly come?* Is Death already laying Siege to many of us, attacking our Out-works, seizing an Eye, a Hand, or a Foot? And shall we forget, *That we must e'er long yield to this last Enemy?* Shall we see these Harbingers arriv'd, and not consider, *That the King of Terrors is at hand?* And shall we not endeavour to fore-arm our selves against so sharp a Conflict as we must then expect?

But this leads me to add,

Let us prepare for such a fearless and comfortable Passage thro' the dark Valley of the Shadow of Death.

To that End, 'Tis highly necessary that we should secure the Grounds of such a solid Confidence in a dying Hour.

If we would be assur'd of God's gracious Presence in our dying Moments, Our Life must be sincerely devoted to his Service. And if the whole Course thereof have been a continued Communion with him, we may then comfortably expect, *That the God of our Life will be our Guide unto Death, and our Portion for ever.* Otherwise, If we have forsaken him in the Time of our health and strength, we have just ground to fear that he will forsake us in the Time of our

our greatest Extremity and Distress. With what Confidence can those call upon him in a *dying Hour*, that have all their *Life time* turn'd their Back upon him? How justly may those that are now deaf to his compassionate Invitations, fear, that he will then be deaf to their most importunate crys for Mercy and Relief? How can those *dying Wretches* think of God without Terror, who are conscious that their past *Life* has been willfully alienated from him.

Again, We must now return to the Blessed Jesus as the *compassionate Shepherd and Bishop of Souls*, and by a sincere Faith commit our Souls as a *Depositum* and *Trust* into his gracious hands, if we would with any well-grounded confidence commend them at their departure to his tender Care. We must now give up our selves to the Dominion and Conduct of his Blessed Spirit, by whose Sanctifying Grace we must be moulded and framed for Eternal Glory. We must perseveringly tread in those *Paths of Righteousness* that lead to the *heavenly Fold*. We must feed in his *Pastures*, attend upon his Sacred Institutions, that by the Communion of the Saints here below, we may be train'd up for the *Society and Converses*, the *Employments and Joys of the Saints in Light*.

But above all, We must live by Faith if we would dye in it. Even by that divine Faith which is the *Substance of things hoped for and the Evidence of things*

Unseen. 'Tis such a Faith that must disarm Death of it's Terrors and Sting. 'Tis such a Faith that must raise us to a confident Reliance on divine Consolations in a dying Hour. 'Tis such a Faith that must dart some cheering *Beams of Light* upon our Souls, when we pass thro' this dark Region of natural Death. 'Tis such a Faith that must with a piercing Eye look beyond the *shades of Death*, and discover to us the *bright and glorious Scenes of Life and Immortality* on the other Side. 'Tis such a Faith must present to our View the Great Lord of the *Invisible World* sending his *heavenly Guards* to convoy us to those *Mansions of Light* he is gone to prepare for us, and ready to welcome us with Appobation and Joy into his *Eternal Presence*. 'Tis such a Faith must enable us to put off our *Garment of Flesh* with as little anxious concern as *ascending Elijah dropt his Mantle on Earth*, by assuring us, That e're long our very *Dust* shall be recollected and refin'd, and *Mortality itself be wholly swallowed up of glorious Eternal Life*. In a Word, 'Tis this divine Faith that must represent Death in it's *bright side* and amiable Aspect to us, as 'tis the *safe* tho' dark Passage into the *Regions of Eternal Light and Life*; And then we shall walk thro' it, not with despondent Fear, but with solid Comfort, and triumphant Joy.



DISSERTATIONS

ON THE

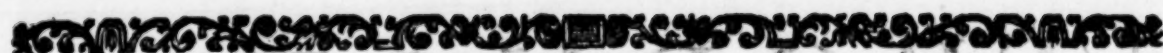
DOCTRIN

OF

J U S T I F I C A T I O N .



Part



SOME

D I S S E R T A T I O N S

On that Important

Article of Justification;

Wherein that Doctrine, as deliver'd in the Holy Scriptures, is truly Stated :

The different Schemes of explaining it fairly examin'd,

And several dangerous Mistakes about it rectify'd.





THE INTRODUCTION.



It may appear to the Reader a little strange and unexpected, That after so many entire Treatises have been publish'd on this important Subject of Justification, (besides what occurs in the common Systems of Divinity) any farther At-

tempt should be made to set this great Article in a true Light. But when I consider how much the plain Doctrine of the Gospel has been rather obscur'd than clear'd, by the Introduction of unscriptural Phrases, and groundless Distinctions, into the Debates about it; and the gross Abuse of those ambiguous Phrases, and useless Distinctions by the Antinomian Writers, (and even some others) to countenance Notions, which are in their real Consequences (tho' I would hope beyond the Intention of those that embrace and abet them) destructive of practical Christianity. I cannot but think it a real Service to the Christian Religion, to make an impartial Enquiry into what is there clearly reveal'd, by which it will easily appear, that a great many subtle Disputes about it, have no real Foundation in the sacred Writings.

And as no inspired Writer has more largely treated on this Article than the Apostle Paul, (particularly in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and more occasionally in others): So had many Writers on this Subject, more attentively consider'd, against whom the Apostle chiefly reasons in those Epistles: And what were their Sentiments which he opposes, they might more easily have seen, how little ground there is for many of those nice Controversies which they have manag'd with so unusual warmth, and too often with so uncharitable a Temper.

Now tho' this Apostle's Arguments to prove, that we must be justify'd by Faith, in opposition to our being justify'd by the Law of Works, are equally strong and cogent in reference to the Unbelieving Gentiles, who had no other Rule than the Law, or Light of Nature, as against the unbelieving Jews, who had the written Law deliver'd by Moses; yet I think, 'tis evident to all impartial Readers, that the Latter are the Adversaries which he chiefly levels his Discourse against.

It will therefore be of considerable Use for our right understanding of the Apostle's Doctrine, to enquire what were the prevailing Sentiments of the unbelieving Jews, which the Apostle here sets himself to refute.

For the unbelieving Jews, 'tis manifest, that tho'

they confidently expected the coming of their promised Messiah, yet they entertain'd wrong Notions of what their Prophets had fore-told, concerning the Kingdom he was to erect. They expected him as a temporal Deliverer, who should free them from the Yoke of the Gentile Powers, advance them to a State of external Prosperity and Glory; and instead of making any Change of the Law as deliver'd by Moses; establish the Ceremonial as well as Moral part of it, and enforce the Observance of it, as the Rule of God's judicial Dealings with them. But they had quite overlooked those Predictions of their own Prophets, which described the meanness of his external Appearance, the manifold Sufferings of his humbled State; and especially his dying as a Propitiation for the Sins of the whole World, and putting an End to their Legal Sacrifices by the oblation of himself, as an expiatory Sacrifice to the Justice of God, and his establishing a new Covenant, distinct from that National Covenant of peculiarity made with them at Mount Sinai, in the Promises whereof the believing and converted Gentiles were to be made joint-Partakers with them.

For the Law, as deliver'd by Moses, they had so high an Opinion of the Excellency even of the Ceremonial part of it, that they reckon'd it unalterable, and of perpetual Obligation.

For the Moral part of it, as they had by their corrupt Glosses, narrow'd the extent of it, and overlooked the spirituality of its Precepts; so they thought themselves to have sufficiently observed it, by the bare performance of what the Letter of it, (as abstracted from its inward and spiritual Sense) enjoyn'd or forbid. And therefore our Blessed Saviour thought it necessary, in his excellent Sermon on the Mount, to vindicate the Spirituality and large extent of it, and tell his Disciples, That except their Righteousness exceeded that of the Scribes and Pharisees, they could not enter into the Kingdom of God, Matt. v. And what a high Conceit the generality of the Jews had, of this bare external Righteousness of theirs, we have an instructive Specimen in the proud Pharisee's Address to God, God, I thank thee that I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, nor even as this Publican. I fast twice a Week, and give Tithes of all I possess, Luke xviii. 11, 12. We may observe the same arrogant Opinion of this bare External Righteousness in that young Ruler, that came to our Saviour, with that important Question, Good Master, What good thing shall I do, that I may inherit Eternal Life? And when our Saviour An-

“ *swers, If thou wilt enter into Life, keep the Com-*
 “ *mandments, he saith unto him, Which? And when*
 “ *our Saviour mentions the particular Commandments*
 “ *of the second Table, adding that comprehensive*
 “ *One, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self, He*
 “ *replies with a ready Confidence and groundless*
 “ *Self-conceit, All these Things have I kept from my*
 “ *Youth, What lack I yet? Mat. xix. 16, 17. Little*
 “ *did he apprehend that he was yet destitute of that*
 “ *predominant Love of God and Heaven, that should*
 “ *have given them the preference in his Esteem and*
 “ *Choice before his earthly Possessions. And we*
 “ *may farther observe, that the Apostle Paul men-*
 “ *tioning the vain Conceit he had of himself, while*
 “ *he was an unbelieving Pharisee, saith, He was*
 “ *touching the Righteousness which is in the Law blame-*
 “ *less. For we cannot reasonably suppose, that he*
 “ *here expresses his present Sentiments concerning*
 “ *his past Conduct before his Conversion to the*
 “ *Christian Faith, but only the overweening Appre-*
 “ *hensions he had of it, while he continued a proud*
 “ *Pharisee, and did not duly understand the Spiritu-*
 “ *ality and Perfection of the Divine Law. (See*
 “ *Rom. vii. 7, 8, 9, 10.) He was far from being*
 “ *blameless in the sight of God, but appear'd so in*
 “ *the Eyes of Men, who could not charge him*
 “ *with any such notorious Breach of the Law, as*
 “ *they were wont in their judicial Courts to take*
 “ *cognizance of.*
 “ *As for their Faults of Ignorance or Inadvertency,*
 “ *they thought their Legal Sacrifices a sufficient*

“ *Attonement for them. But they thought there was*
 “ *such an intrinsic Excellency and Worth in those*
 “ *external Works of the Law they perform'd, that*
 “ *they were sufficient to render the Reward promis'd*
 “ *a Reward of Debt, and to enable them to claim*
 “ *it from the strict distributive Justice of God, ac-*
 “ *cording to that Tenour of the Law of Works,*
 “ *Do this, and live. And that noted saying of Ma-*
 “ *nasseh Ben-Israel, shews, that the Jews still en-*
 “ *ertain the same arrogant Opinion of the Excel-*
 “ *lency and Dignity of these external Works of*
 “ *theirs. Meritis Dei gratiam acquiri non est dubi-*
 “ *tandum. There is no Doubt (saith he) That the Fa-*
 “ *vour of God is to be acquir'd by our own Merits.*
 “ *And how opposite the Sentiments of theirs were*
 “ *to the whole Scheme of the Gospel-Revelation;*
 “ *how injurious they were to the Honour of Divine*
 “ *Grace: And how manifestly they tended to rob*
 “ *our Blessed Saviour of the Glory of his Mediation,*
 “ *and the Merit of his Obedience and propitiatory*
 “ *Sacrifice, must appear to every judicious Obser-*
 “ *ver. And he that would rightly understand what*
 “ *the Apostle Paul delivers on this Subject, must*
 “ *have these arrogant Sentiments of the Jewish Do-*
 “ *ctors in his Eye, as the pernicious Doctrine which*
 “ *he sets himself to confute. This is the true Key to*
 “ *lead him into the Sense and Scope of the Apostle's*
 “ *excellent Reasonings on this Subject, of Evange-*
 “ *lical Justification: As will more fully appear in*
 “ *the following Dissertations.*

N. B. Page 468 and 469 (being the Introduction to the Dissertations on Justification) must be plac'd between 442 and 443.

As for their Family of Forefathers or Ancestors, we thought their Moral Sacrifices a sufficient

D I S S E R T A T I O N S, &c.

Before I enter on the following *Dissertations*, I have thought it needful to shew, How far all sober and judicious Protestants appear to me to be happily agreed in the most necessary and important Branches of this great Article of our Faith, concerning our *Justification*, that the Reader may have the less Occasion to be stumbled at their different ways of explaining it, and the Controversies occasioned thereby.

The following Propositions contain such Truths as all sober and judicious Protestants, as far as I can judge, are entirely agreed in.



I. All do agree, That no inherent or actual Righteousness of our's can fully answer the Demands of the Law of Works; (whether we understand it of the Law of Innocency or the Law of *Moses*) or cou'd, if God should deal with us according to the strict Tenour of that Law, give us a Right to Impunity and eternal Life. With respect to that Law, *We have all sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God, And the whole World is become guilty before him, or, obnoxious to his vindictive Justice.*

II. All do agree, That the sinless Obedience, and atoning Sacrifice of Christ (in conformity to the Law of his Mediation) is the only meritorious or procuring Cause of that Right to Impunity and Life which the Law of Truth, or the Gospel-Covenant conveys unto us; The Promise thereof in that Covenant being wholly founded on the sinless Obedience and atoning Sacrifice of Christ as the only valuable Consideration on which it is made; and the sovereign unmerited Grace and Mercy of God being the Spring and Source of that gracious Promise. So that nothing wrought in us or done by us, is the meritorious Cause of our Justification.

III. All do agree, That the Faith by which we are said in the Holy Scriptures to be justified, must be, not a dead but living Faith. Such a Faith as *purifies our Hearts, works by Love to God and Men overcomes the World, and is the Principle of new Obedience.* No Faith that falls short of this can be available to our Justification.

IV. All do agree, That against a real, or supposed Accusation of final Unbelief and Impenitency, We can be no otherwise justified than by the Evi-

dence of the sincerity of our Faith and Repentance and New-Obedience.

The 3 Former of these Propositions will I think be readily granted. The 4th is self-evident. And all that own the Truth of them must be agreed in the main Substance of what the Gospel reveals, in reference to this Article. Other Differences in reference to it seem to me to arise from unnecessary Distinctions, and unscriptural Phrases ill-understood and ill-apply'd.

I shall therefore for illustrating the scriptural Doctrine concerning this Article offer some *Disertations* upon the following Questions.

Question I. *What the Scriptural Notion of Justification is?*

II. Quest. *What is necessarily included in the Notion of that Faith by which we are said to be justified? And in what Sense Faith is oppos'd to the Works of the Law?*

III. Quest. *In what Sense we are said to be justified by it?*

IV. Quest. *In what Sense that Phrase so commonly used, of the Righteousness of Christ being imputed to us, must be so understood, as to render it agreeable and consonant to the Doctrine of the Gospel? And in what Sense it may be so taken as to be truly subversive of it, in it's native Consequences?*

V. Quest. *What that Law of Faith is, by which we are said to be justified, in opposition to the Law of Works? and How all Boasting is excluded thereby?*

VI. Quest. *Whether Justification, as God's Act, must be considered as an Instantaneous, or continued Act?*

The Discussion of these several Questions may set this Article in a true Light, and discover several Mistakes that many Writers on this Subject have unhappily run into.

Differ-

D E S S E R T A T I O N I.

Question I. **W**hat the Scriptural Notion of Justification is?

Answer Justification is by all Protestants very justly taken in what they call a forensick Sense, as opposed to *Condemnation*. This is so fully demonstrated by all Protestant Writers in opposition to the Romish Doctors who by God's *Justifying us* understand *his making us inherently Righteous, or Holy*, that I need not enlarge on the Refutation of so palpable a Mistake concerning the Sense of the Word. It does indeed presuppose that *Change in our Nature*, which the Holy Scriptures call our *Regeneration*, or our *Sanctification* as begun. But the Notion of it is entirely different, and implies a *Change in our State*. Such a Change in our State as that which is made in the State of a guilty Rebel, when by a Royal Act of Grace he is exempted from the Capital Punishment he had deserved, and restored to all the Rights and Privileges of a Loyal Subject.

Justification may be considered either as God's *Act*, or, as our *Privilege and Benefit* that accrues to us from that gracious Act.

Justification considered as God's *Act*, is his admitting us into, or continuing us in a State of Favour and Acceptance with him, by freeing us from deserved Condemnation, and making us Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life.

Justification considered as our *Privilege and Benefit* by that Act, consists, in our being brought into such a State of Favour and Acceptance with God, and having that Right to Impunity and Life, which his Act of Grace conveys to us.

I here confine my self to the Scriptural Notion of Justification abstractedly considered, because I shall have occasion in the Resolution of the following Quæries to consider distinctly the meritorious procuring Cause of it, And what is made absolutely necessary on our Part by God's *Act of Grace*, or *Law of Faith*, in order to our being justified.

And I need only suggest this one Argument to vindicate this Notion of Justification to be the true Scriptural One, *viz.* That we are justified under the Character of such as *have sinned, and fallen short of the Glory of God*, Of such as *have been Ungodly*, of such as had rendered them selves guilty and *obnoxious to his vindictive Justice*; Of such as had no such Works as the *Law of Works* absolutely requires in order to our Acceptance with God, and having a Right to it's promised Reward. And our Justification must necessarily include the cancelling our former Guilt, and giving us a Right to a Reward of Grace by an Act of most free Grace founded on the Redemption that is in Christ, *i. e.* on the costly Price of his attoning Blood shed to expiate our past Guilt, and to obtain our happy Discharge from it. And accordingly the Apostle Paul speaks of being *justified by the Blood of Christ*. An Expression entirely parallel to that other in the Verse following of our *being reconciled to God by his Death*. See *Rom. v. 9, 10.* Our being *justified by his Blood*, cannot mean our being accounted and accepted as perfect Fullfillers of the Law of God by his Blood; For if we were justified in this Sense, There had been no Occasion or need of the shedding of his Blood. And when our Saviour saith concerning the *Penitent Publican, that he returned to his House justified* rather than the *proud Pharisee* he evidently

means by his being *justified*, his being absolved from his past Guilt, and restored to a State of Favour and Acceptance with God. And in the very same Sense, the Apostle Paul uses the same Word in his Epistles as will afterwards more fully appear.

Now to be justified under the Character of a *Transgressor of the Law*, and yet to be justified under the Character and Notion of a *sinless Observer* of it, is a gross Contradiction. Nor is the Contradiction wholly avoided by saying, We may be considered by God as Transgressors of the Law in our *own natural Persons*, And yet be considered as sinless Observers of it, by a *Legal Proxy* *i. e.* by one who in a Law Sense, and in the Allowance of the Law giver was reckon'd the same Person with us.

For besides that 'tis untrue, That Christ the Mediator is considered and regarded by God as the same Person in a Law-sense with those he mediates for; The Contradiction still remains attended with this farther Absurdity, That as it supposes our Saviour to be regarded by God as in a Law-sense the same Person with every one that is justified; So it supposes every such Person both to have perform'd a sinless Obedience to the Divine Law in and by him, And yet to have suffer'd in and by him the penalty of Disobedience. Whereas the divine Law never requires both from the same Person. And to add no more at present. This Notion of our Justification plainly supposes the *Law of Works* not the *Law of Faith*, to be the Rule of Judgment by which God proceeds in our Justification. But of this more will occur in the Discussion of the last Quæries I proposed.

D I S S E R T A T I O N II.

Question II. **W**hat is necessarily included in the Notion of that Faith, by which we are said in the Scriptures to be justified? And in what Sense Faith is opposed by the Apostle Paul to the Works of the Law?

In order to the Resolution of the former of these Quæries, I would premise, That we may justly conclude from that manifold Wisdom of God that has contriv'd the method, and appointed the Terms of our Justification, That whatever is absolutely necessary to render guilty Sinners morally capable Objects of that Act of Grace whereby God pardons their past Guilt, and gives them a right to Eternal Life, must be required on their part in order to their Interest in this blessed Privilege of Right to Impunity and Life. When I say, *Morally capable Objects* of God's Act of Grace in justifying them, I mean so qualified as that he may thus pardon them, and entitle them to Life upon Terms fully consistent not only with the Glory of his free unmerited Grace, but with the Essential Holiness of his Nature, and with the Honour of his Authority as our supreme Ruler and Judge. For he will never display his Grace and Mercy in such a Way, as must cast a Blemish on his essential Purity, or expose his Government to contempt. And the want of duly considering this, appears to me one great Occasion of Men's Mistakes about the true Extent of that Faith, that is God's appointed Means or Condition of our Justification. †

† By Condition I understand no more than what is commonly called *Conditio sine qua non*. As a Rebel's Submission to the Government, is the Condition of his enjoying the Benefit of an Act of Indemnity.

This being premis'd, We may observe, That Faith in the New-Testament, is sometimes taken in its extensive Latitude, for our unfeigned Assent to the Truth, Consent to the Terms and Affiance in the Promises of the Gospel-Covenant, (i. e. Affiance in the Truth and Faithfulness of God, and in the Mediation of Christ for the Performance of them.) And accordingly, a noted Confession gives us this excellent and comprehensive Description of Saving Faith. "By this Faith a Christian believeth to be true, whatever is revealed in the Word for the Authority of God speaking therein, and acteth differently upon that which each particular Passage containeth, yielding Obedience to the Commands, trembling at the Threatnings, and embracing the Promises of God, both for this Life, and that which is to come. But the Principal Acts of Faith are Accepting, Receiving and Resting upon Christ alone for Justification, Sanctification and Eternal Life, by virtue of the Covenant of Grace.

Now Faith taken in this Latitude, must necessarily include our sincere Repentance and Conversion to God. For we do not practically believe the Promise of Pardon and Acceptance which he has made to repenting Sinners, and act suitably thereto, without an hearty Renunciation of the service of sin, and returning to God, and unfeignedly devoting ourselves to his Service, and without it, are not, morally, capable Objects of his forgiving Mercy. We do not believe that God is in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases to them, and act suitably thereto, without being prevail'd on, thereby to be reconcil'd to him, by laying down our unreasonable Enmity, and returning to a voluntary Subjection to him, as our rightful Lord, and a deliberate Choice of him as the only Fountain of our final Blessedness.

Sometimes Faith is taken in a more limited Sense, as it only respects the Office of Christ as Mediator. Thus the Apostle Paul seems to distinguish Faith in our Lord Jesus, from Repentance towards God, (These two containing a short Summary of the Terms of the New Covenant, when we first enter into it) Acts xx. 21.

Now that Faith, when we are so often said to be justify'd by it, must be taken in that more extensive Latitude as inclusive of sincere Repentance towards God, is hence undeniably evident, that as the Pardon of our sins is one essential Branch of our Justification, so Repentance towards God is as truly the Condition, or the appointed Means of obtaining forgiveness, as Faith in the Mediation of Christ. And the true Reason thereof is, because 'tis absolutely necessary to render us the capable and meet Objects of the pardoning Mercy of God, in a consistency with the essential Holiness of his Nature, and the Honour of his Government. It wou'd be an evident Stain and Blemish to the one and the other, for God to pardon and receive into a state of Favour and Acceptance with him an impenitent Sinner while he continues such. There must be a change in his Nature and inward Frame towards God, and in the Course of his Life if continued, in order to such an happy Change in his State as his Justification imports.

And hence we may see, how useless and dangerous that Distinction so commonly us'd by some Writers is, between the Faith that does justify, and Faith as it does justify.

They own indeed, that the Faith that does justify does either include Repentance towards God, or at least is always accompanied by it. But they deny our being justified by it, either consider'd as inclusive of Repentance inseparably attended by it.

To that purpose they tell us, that Faith as receiving and resting on Christ and his Righteousness, is the alone Instrument of Justification; yet it is not alone in the Person justified, but it is ever accompanied with all other saving Graces, and is no dead Faith, but worketh by Love. And that Faith justifies a Sinner in the sight of

God, not because of those other Graces that always accompany it, or good Works that flow from it, nor as if the Grace of Faith, or any Act of it were imputed to him for Justification, but only as an Instrument whereby he receiveth Christ, and his Righteousness.

For the Phrase of receiving Christ, 'tis a scriptural One, and must be understood of a Reception of him in a moral Sense, i. e. of receiving him as our Prophet by an unfeigned Belief of his heavenly Doctrine, as our High-Priest and Mediator, by a reliance on the Merit of his sinless Obedience, and atoning Sacrifice, and prevalent Intercession, for securing our Interest in the great and precious Promises of the New and Everlasting Covenant: As our King and Lord, by a voluntary Subjection to his gracious Yoke, and a Resignation of ourselves to the Guidance of his Holy Spirit. And even thus to receive Christ does at least virtually include Repentance, it being the manifest Design of all these his mediatory Offices to bring us back to God by a sincere Conversion. But for the Phrase of receiving Christ's Righteousness, 'tis wholly unknown to the New Testament, and carries a dangerous Sound with it. Christ's Righteousness, (as I shall shew anon) is no other than his perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation, the excellent Fruits and Benefits whereof are indeed given and convey'd to us by the Promises of the Gospel-Covenant, upon our being duly qualify'd to partake of them by our Compliance with the gracious Terms on which they are offer'd. But Christ's own perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation, is never said to be in itself given to us, or receiv'd by us. For that Gift of Righteousness, which we are said to receive or obtain, Rom. v. 17. is not to be understood of Christ's personal Righteousness, (whether habitual or actual) but of that Right to Impunity and Life, which the New Covenant conveys to all believing Penitents as the Fruit of his Mediation. Christ's perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation, either by taking on him the Form of a Servant, or yielding a sinless Obedience to the divine Law in our Nature, or suffering the Punishment of our Sins when he offer'd himself our Expiatory Sacrifice, is neither in itself, nor in God's Estimation reckon'd to be our Performance of it; nor can it be as some express it transferr'd by God to us; And we can no otherwise be said to receive it, than as that improper Phrase implies our Reliance on the Merit and Virtue of it, to obtain our Pardon and Acceptance with God upon the Terms of the Gospel-Covenant. But no such Act of ours can make his Performance to be ours. And our Faith can in no proper Sense be said to be the Instrument of receiving his personal Performance of the Law of his Mediation. Our Faith is indeed the appointed Means of our obtaining that Right to Impunity and Life, that he has thereby procur'd for all that so believe in him, as to return to God by him.

And I the rather insist on the dangerous Tendency of this unscriptural Distinction, because I find some otherwise learned Divines (who yet disclaim the Title of Antinomians) carry it so far, as to confine all the Influence of our Faith on our Justification to these two single Acts of it, i. e. "Approbation and Reliance; or accepting and relying on Christ's Righteousness; and even tell us, that our voluntary Choosing of Christ and his Laws, and approving and submitting to them, are such Acts of Faith as are not made use of in our Justification; but only those Acts of Faith, whereby we apprehend Christ and apply him; and that Faith justifies us only by its Respective, not by its operative Quality". So that a Man's approving it, that Christ's perfect Obedience shou'd become his as perform'd by Christ, consider'd as in a Law sense the same Person with him, and trusting in it, is the only appointed Means of his being justified by God (i. e. being, as the Author explains it, accounted a perfect Fullfiller of his Law by Christ, as his legal Proxy) But if these be the only Acts of Faith that any Man has

has to depend on for his Justification, I am afraid, he wou'd fall far short of it; and that such narrow *Exertments of Faith* (as he is pleas'd to call them) wou'd be as unavailable to *justify* as to *save* him. Besides this supposes us to be justified upon the Terms of the *Law of Works*, as some way perfect Fullfillers of it, instead of being justified by the *Law of Faith*, quite contrary to the Apostle's express Assertion. *Rom. iii. 27.* Of which I shall have Occasion to treat more fully under the following Quæries.

As for the other part of the Quæries under our present Consideration, *viz.* In what Sense Faith is oppos'd to the *Works of the Law*, when we are said to be *justify'd* by it? Those that have wrote on this Subject seem to entertain very different Sentiments.

Those that distinguish between the *Faith that does justify*, and *Faith* consider'd as it *does justify*, and accordingly confine all its Influence on our Justification to that single Act, which they call *Receiving, Apprehending or applying Christ's Righteousness*, earnestly contend, that 'tis oppos'd by the Apostle to all *Actions*, that are in a moral Sense *sincerely Good*, to all Instances of Obedience to the Law of God. And whereas 'tis justly objected against this Notion, that then *Faith* must be oppos'd to itself, since it necessarily includes a multiplicity of such Actions that are sincerely good, and such as the moral Law itself virtually binds us to, such as an Assent of Judgment to the Truth of divine Revelation, a trusting in the Promises of God, and in his Power and Faithfulness as engag'd for the Performance of them, and as some add, a *receiving Christ himself* in all his Offices, as our Prophet, mediating High-Priest, King and Head, which includes a Consent to the Duties consequent on those Relations he bears to us; and particularly, *Faith in the Son of God* is represented by himself as by way of Eminency, the *Work* which God first and principally requires (For when the *Jews* ask'd him, *What shall we do that we may work the Works of God*, he answers, *this is the Work of God, that ye believe on him whom he has sent.* *John vi. 28, 29.*) When I say this is justly objected against their Notion, they are forced to have recourse to very extraordinary subtilty in distinguishing. To that Purpose they tell us, that tho' Faith be eminently a good Work, yet it does not justify consider'd as a Work, that is only a *passive Instrument*, that nothing is to be consider'd in it, but its *receptive Quality*, that it justifies only as a *Beggar's Hand stretch'd out to receive a Gift*, or (as a confident Writer more oddly illustrates it) as a *Boy's Hat that catcheth the Ball*. In short, it only justifies they tell us, as it *apprehends and apply's Christ's Righteousness*. Now if Christ's Performance of the Law of his Mediation be not in any proper Sense in itself, either *given to us*, or *receiv'd by us*, tho' the genuine Effect and Fruit of it, *viz.* our *Right to Impunity and Life* upon the Terms of the Gospel-Covenant, be both *given to us* and *receiv'd by us*, when we comply with these Terms, then to say that our Faith no otherwise justifies us than as an *Instrument whereby we receive Christ's Righteousness*, is in Effect to say, we are not justified by Faith at all; since to *receive his Righteousness itself*, is no Act of Faith at all that is requir'd of us; for it is never *given by God to be ours in itself*; tho' the purchased Effects are given us, when we are duly qualify'd to partake of them. Of which more will occur under the 4th Quæry.

But if we will attend to the plain distinction the Apostle has laid down, we may clearly see, that the *Works* whether of the *Ceremonial* or *Moral Law* which he opposes to *Faith*, are such Works, as if we had them, would render the *Reward of Debt*, and not of *Grace*. Such as by their own supposed Excellency and Dignity would enable us to claim the *Reward of eternal Life*, not by meer Favour and Grace, but as due to us (tho' not in the course of *commutative*, yet of *strict distributive Justice*.) Such as suppose us to stand in no need of our Saviour's Mediation, and the

Merit of it, either to obtain for us an Act of Pardon and Indemnity, or the Conditional Grant and Gift of eternal Life. For the Apostle lays down this as a certain Maxim, *That to him that worketh the Reward is reckon'd of Debt and not of Grace.* Which Maxim would be entirely false if understood of all *sincerely good Actions*; but is true and just if understood of such *Works* as by their Perfection or intrinsic Dignity would render the *Reward due* in the course of *strict distributive Justice*, and according to the exact Tenour of the *Law of Works*. Our Faith taken in its just extensive Latitude, necessarily includes many such *sincerely good Actions*, and is the operative Principle of many more, and otherwise wou'd not render us capable Objects of such a glorious Privilege as our Pardon and Acceptance to Eternal Life. And yet far be it from any humble Christian to imagine, that he can on the account of them claim the heavenly Reward as a Debt from the strict distributive Justice of God, because their culpable Imperfection needs mercy to pardon their Defects, and the Merits of our great Mediator, to recommend them to the divine Acceptance, in order to our obtaining the gracious Reward of them. And the overlooking this plain Distinction laid down by the Apostle himself has occasion'd many unhappy Mistakes about his Doctrine concerning our Justification; and some of them, such as are quite opposite to the general strain of the Holy Scriptures, both in the Old and New Testaments. But of this also more will occur under the two last Quæries.

DISSERTATION III.

Quæry III. **I**N what Sense we are said to be *justify'd* by Faith?

Answer. We are *justified by Faith*, as it is the necessary Qualification, or Means appointed by God in the Gospel-Covenant, for our obtaining the Benefit of that *Act of Grace*, whereby he receives us into a state of Favour and Acceptance with him, by pardoning our past Guilt, and giving us a right to the gracious Reward of eternal Life.

Only Faith here must be taken in that extensive Latitude I mention'd before, as inclusive of that unfeigned Repentance and Conversion to God, by which we first enter upon a Life of sincere Obedience to him.

That such an unfeigned Repentance and Conversion to God is as truly God's appointed Means to our being brought into a state of Favour and Acceptance with him as any Acts of Faith that only respect the Office of Christ as our mediating High-Priest, is evident from the whole strain of the Holy Scriptures. To this purpose we may observe, that when our Saviour came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, (*i. e.* that *Law of Faith* which is to be the Rule of final Judgment in it.) He does it in these remarkable Words, *The Time is fulfill'd, and the Kingdom of God is at hand, Repent ye, and believe the Gospel.* Turn to God by unfeigned Repentance, and embrace by an unfeigned practical Faith those glad Tidings I bring you of his being thro' my Mediation ready to restore all such sincere Penitents to a state of Favour and Acceptance with him, see *Mark i. 14, 15.*—And in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, he represents the relenting Publican, that with true Compunction of Heart made his humble Suit to divine Mercy, as *returning to his House justify'd, rather than the proud Pharisee*, that made a vain Ostentation of his falsely pretended Righteousness and Merit, *Luke xviii. 11, &c.* And we may observe, that when he sent his Apostles after his Resurrection to preach the same Gospel of his Kingdom, This is the compendious Summary of their Commission, *to preach Repentance and Remission of Sins*

in his Name to all Nations, Luke xxiv. 47. And to enumerate all the particular Texts that mention Repentance and Conversion as the necessary Condition, or appointed Means of our obtaining Forgiveness and Restoration to the divine Favour, were to transcribe a considerable Part of the Holy Scriptures. All the Evangelical Promises of the Old Testament, as well as the Declarations of the New, ran in this strain, see *Isaiab i. ver. 16, 17, 18. lv. 5, 6. Acts ii. 38. iii. 19.*

And therefore to tell us, that Faith justifies a Sinner in the sight of God, not because of those other Graces that always accompany it, or good Works that flow from it, nor as if the Grace of Faith or any Act of it were imputed to him for Justification, but only as an Instrument whereby he receiveth Christ and his Righteousness, is an Assertion that I cannot assent to, and as far as I can see in the latter Part of it is contradictory to the Words of the Apostle Paul, and no way agreeable to the true Sense of them.

Tho' we are said to be justify'd by Faith, our Faith has no causal influence on our Justification at all. 'Tis no more than the appointed Qualification of all that shall partake of that Act of Grace, and indeed such a necessary Qualification, that without it we are not morally capable or meet Objects of God's forgiving Mercy, and gracious Acceptance to Life.

Now the great Design of God in the Justification of guilty Sinners, is not only to display the glory of his own transcendent Grace and Mercy, and to secure to our Lord Jesus the Honour of his Mediatory Undertaking, but also to do this in a way that is fully consistent with the Essential Holiness of his Nature, and the Honour and Rights of his Moral Government. Now Faith taken in its comprehensive Latitude is most wisely and admirably adapted to both these Ends.

'Tis admirably adapted to serve that great End of exalting the Riches of divine Grace, and securing to our Blessed Saviour the Honour of his Mediation. For by Faith we own our selves Guilty before God. We renounce all Pretension to any Works of ours that could make the Reward to be of Debt, and not of Grace. We deprecate God's entering into strict Judgment with us, as conscious that if he shou'd, no Flesh, (i. e. no Man) could be justified in his sight. We sue for Pardon and Acceptance with him to his unmerited Grace and Mercy, thro' the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ. And hereby we give to God the glory of his sovereign and rich Grace in our Forgiveness; and to Christ the Honour of the great Work of Redemption by the Price of his precious Blood shed for obtaining the Remission of our Sins. We own Eternal Life to be the Gift of God through Jesus Christ. The Promise of it upon the Terms prescrib'd in the Gospel for our attaining the actual Possession of it, being a most free and gratuitous Act founded on the valuable Consideration of Christ's Obedience and Sacrifice as the only meritorious Cause of it.

But then on the other hand, as 'tis equally necessary that the Honour of God's Holiness, and the Rights of his Government shou'd be provided for, and maintain'd, by our becoming morally capable, or meet Objects of God's pardoning Mercy and gracious Acceptance, our Faith is no less wisely adapted to serve that end of God in our Justification; as it purifies our Hearts, as it is the Spring of true Repentance, as it turns the bent of our Souls from the prevalent Love of Sin, and this vain World to the predominant Love of God, and Holiness, and Heaven; as it is the living and active Principle of sincere Obedience. For unless it be such a Living and Operative Faith as this, it will never be available for our Justification; and its being such a Living and Operative Principle is necessary to render us meet Objects of divine Forgiveness and Acceptance to eternal Life. And 'tis so far from being true, that we are not justify'd by Faith, because of other Graces that accompany it, that this is one great Reason of Faith, being the appointed Means of our

Justification, because it is the Root and Seed of all particular gracious Habits, and virtually comprehends them. 'Tis consider'd as the radical Principle of the New and Divine Life, when 'tis made the comprehensive Condition of our Interest in all the Blessings of the New-Covenant, and particularly that great Blessing of Right to Impunity and Life.

There are two Things which seem to me to have led some pious Writers to confine the influence of Faith as the appointed Means of our being justified, to some particular Acts of it.

They have consider'd the genuine Actings of a Soul distress'd with the Sense of its Guilt, and conscious of its being obnoxious to the vindictive Justice of God; such a distressed Soul in seeking relief from those fears which the Sense of Guilt naturally excites, is wont to fix his Thoughts on Christ as the great High-Priest, and the only Mediator between an offended God and offending Sinners, and on his Sacrifice as the only effectual Propitiation for the Sins of Men, and regards that as next to the Mercy of God, (as declared in the promises of the Gospel) the only solid ground of his hope of Forgiveness. And so far such a convinced Sinner acts very suitably to the Apprehensions he entertains of his own Case. And hence they are led to consider these Acts of his Faith as the only Acts that give him an Interest in divine Forgiveness.

But they seem not to consider, that the Promises of God, which are founded on the virtue of Christ's atoning Sacrifice, have made Repentance towards God as truly the appointed Means of obtaining Forgiveness, or the indispensibly necessary Qualification of all whom God has promis'd to pardon, as any Acts of Faith that relate only to the Priesthood of Christ, and his propitiatory Sacrifice. And these Acts of Faith wou'd not be available to interest us in divine Forgiveness, but as accompany'd by, or productive of that sincere Repentance and Conversion to God, without which we are not morally capable Objects of his pardoning Mercy. And tho' such Divines do suppose an inseparable Connexion between these Acts of Faith and true Repentance, yet they overlook the necessary use and influence of Repentance to render us the duly qualified Objects of divine Forgiveness. And do not duly consider, that Faith in the atoning Blood of Christ is but the Means to bring us to that thorough Conversion to God that must render us capable of so great a Privilege as the Remission of our Sins, and our Restoration to the Favour of an offended God.

Others seem led thus to confine the influence of Faith in our Justification to some particular Acts of it by a wrong Notion of Justification itself; as if it consisted in God's giving Christ's Personal Righteousness to us to be in a Law-sense our personal Righteousness, and therefore supposes nothing more requir'd to its becoming ours; but that Act of Faith whereby we are said to receive it, and apply it. But this Notion of Justification has no Foundation in the Holy Scriptures, as I shall have occasion to shew in a Dissertation on the fifth Quæry.

As for that part of the foremention'd Assertion, That Faith does not justify a Sinner, as if the Grace of Faith, or any Act of it were imputed to him for Righteousness, but only as an Instrument whereby he receiveth Christ and his Righteousness; I take the former part of it to be expressly contradictory to the Words, and no way agreeable to the Sense of the Apostle in that noted Passage, Rom. iv. 5. and other Parallel Passages of the same import in that Chapter.

That when the Apostle asserts, That to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the ungodly, his Faith is imputed (or accounted, or reckon'd, for the Word λογίζεται is the same in the Original) to him for Righteousness, he intends by Faith, either the Habit or Act of it, or rather both, is manifest to any that will, without an unaccountable prepossession, read that Chapter, If Abraham's in hope believing against hope, that he might be the Father of many Nations, &c.

If his not staggering at the Promise thro' Unbelief, but being strong in Faith, giving Glory to God: If his being fully persuaded, that what God had promis'd he was able to perform: If our believing in him that raised up Jesus from the dead, signify neither the Grace of Faith, nor any Act of it, then are the Apostles Words utterly unintelligible. For no Expressions can be used more full and clear to represent it.

This is so evident, That Dr. Edwards himself, (tho' he stiffly pleads for that wrong Sense of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, which I shall consider under the next Quæry) could not forbear the passing some Censure on the Assertion under our Consideration. For speaking of the Imputation of our Faith for Righteousness, he thus goes on. "Some mean it of the Righteousness of Christ, and tell us the Act is put for the Object. Not only some Antinomians, but the Assembly of Divines interpret it thus, Not as if the Grace of Faith or any Act thereof were imputed to us for Justification. But certainly, if it were a metonymical and improper way of speaking, it is strange it should be so often repeated. We read in all these following Places, That Faith or Believing is imputed, reckon'd, and accounted for Righteousness. Rom. iv. 3, 4, 5, 9, 10, 11, 22, 23, 24. This frequent and unalterable expressing it in the same Words, shews, That Faith itself is here meant. And by the imputing of Faith to us we must understand God's gracious Acceptance of it in the Work of our Justification, &c. Which is true in itself, tho' not as that learned Doctor explains it."

That the Words of this Assertion are expressly contradictory to the Words of the Apostle, seems to be granted by a late Writer that has undertaken to apologize for them. To that purpose he mentions several particular Texts, wherein the Words in one Text carry an Appearance of contradiction to those of another, tho' the real Sense does not. Tho' I am sorry that he mentions those Words, *This is my Body*, as if their literal sense asserted the Popish Doctrine of Transubstantiation. For any judicious Protestant Writer might have shewn him, That the literal sense, itself, is inconsistent with that Popish Tenet.

But it would have been more becoming those who have thought fit to insert in a publick Confession, and Assertion *in terminis*, contradictory to that of the Apostle, at the same time to have explain'd in what sense the Apostle's Assertion was true, and in what sense it was not, and only rejected what they accounted the wrong sense, without flatly denying the Proposition itself. This would have shewn a more becoming Reverence for the Words of that inspired Writer.

But to let this pass, I proceed to shew, That this Assertion is not only directly contradictory to the words of the Apostle, but that the Explication commonly offer'd, is no way agreeable to the real Sense and Intendment of that inspired Writer. And that will much depend upon our Understanding aright, what the Apostle means by the Word *Righteousness* in this Passage.

Righteousness may be consider'd in general, as either respecting the preceptive part of a Law, and so it imports our Conformity to it as the *Rule of Duty*; or, as respecting the Sanction of a Law; and so it imports a freedom from its deserved Penalty, and a restored Right to the Privileges forfeited by the breach of it. Such a relative *Righteousness* as a condemned Rebel has, when upon his penitent Submission, he is, by an Act of Grace, made *rectus in curia*, indemnify'd from the Law, and restor'd to the Protection of the Rights and Privileges of a Loyal Subject.

That *Righteousness* is sometimes us'd by the Apostle Paul, in this Sense, is evident from several Passages in his Epistles, some of which I shall have occasion hereafter to mention. I shall, at present, insist on these two in his Epistle to the Galatians, relating to this Subject of Justification. The one is in Chap. ii.

ver. 21. *If Righteousness come by the Law, then Christ*

is dead in vain. Where if by *Righteousness* be meant Conformity to the Precepts of the Law; to say, it comes by the Law, is little better than a Tautology. But if by *Righteousness* he means, *A Right to Impunity and Reward*; the Sense is clear, and his reasoning just; That this would render the Death of Christ useless and needless. The same Observation may be apply'd to that other Passage, Chap. iii. ver. 21. *If there had been a Law given that could have given Life, verily Righteousness should have been by the Law, i. e. Our right to Life would have resulted from the performance of it.* To these I may add several Passages in his other Epistles, wherein *Righteousness* signifies Justification consider'd as our Privilege, or Right to Impunity and Life. Thus, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, speaking of the New Testament (or, Covenant) as compar'd with the Covenant of Mount Sinai, he calls the latter the *Ministration of Condemnation*, but the former, the *Ministration of Righteousness*. Where *Righteousness* being opposed to Condemnation, does evidently denote freedom from Condemnation, and right to Life. And Dr. Edwards himself thus expounds this Expression of the Apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, in which he so often so speaks of *Righteousness by Faith*, and the *Righteousness of God by Faith*, concerning Justification consider'd as our Privilege, Rom. iii. 22. x. 4. So he expounds the same Phrase, Phil. iii. 4. And he recommends to his Reader this Observation, as what may help him to understand the Meaning of some Places that are generally mistaken by Expositors. See his *Treatise of the Doctrine of Faith and Justification*, p. 323.

To apply this to the present Subject, There are two Senses of the word *Righteousness*, one of which must be suppos'd intended by the Apostle here, if we understand him as speaking of a *Righteousness*, with respect to the Law of Works. If he is here speaking of *Righteousness* as it respects the preceptive part of the Law of Works, he must, by *Righteousness*, understand a perfect Conformity to what that Law enjoins, and which, consequently, by the sanction of it, makes the Reward to be of Debt and not of Grace. But how is it possible that the Apostle should intend *Righteousness* in this Sense, when he so plainly denies our being justify'd by that Law as the Rule of Judgment, and asserts our being justify'd by the Law of Faith, which requires no such Righteousness from us, as the Condition of our Admission to a State of Favour and Acceptance with God, by the Pardon of our Sins, and the grant of a new Right to Life. And when he supposes that Faith itself to be devoid of any such perfect Works as that Law has made necessary to entitle us to the promised Reward of it, and describes it as *a believing on him that justifies the Ungodly*. Our Faith necessarily presupposes our former Violations of that Law of Works, and includes a penitent Confession of our former Guilt thereby, and an humble suit to that forgiving Mercy, which nothing but an Act of Grace can entitle us to. And therefore the Apostle could not mean, That our Faith is reckon'd or imputed to us as a perfect Conformity to the preceptive part of the Law of Works. For this would ascribe false Judgment to the God of Truth.

But to solve this, we are told, "That when Faith is said to be imputed, or accounted to us for Righteousness, [by which they understand a perfect Conformity to the preceptive part of the divine Law,] it is not to be understood materially, but relatively and organically, in relation to Christ the Object of Faith. And that is the Righteousness truly and really imputed to us, and not Faith for another Righteousness. For then the Righteousness of Christ, and a Righteousness of ours, would, by a two fold Imputation be joyn'd in the business of Justification, which I take to be far less reconcileable with the Doctrine of the Apostle than the Words of the Confession are with his. It is certain there is no such Imputation of Faith for Righteousness, as that

“ the Grace or acting of it are become our Righteousness, in consideration, and upon Account of which God justifies us. We are not, by believing, made Righteousness to ourselves, nor is Faith so imputed as to be made our Righteousness. But Jesus Christ is made of God Righteousness to us, and by his Obedience it is, that we are made Righteous, that is, as upon our believing we have it imputed to us. Thus in our Justification we are made the Righteousness of God in Christ, not in ourselves, or any thing that is our own. For such a Dispensation of Grace would be inconsistent with Grace; and suppose two sorts of Imputation not capable of Composition. Faith therefore is not our Righteousness before God, but *the Righteousness which is of God by Faith*, as the Apostle explains himself, *Phil. iii. 9.* And when he speaks of Faith, as imputed to us for Righteousness, there is a manifest Figure in the Words, which Tropologia is not unusual in holy Writ. Hence the meaning is not, That Faith is accounted our Righteousness, but the Apostle speaks of it with reference to the Righteousness of Christ; which, as we apprehend by Faith, is imputed to us, and made ours. And we accordingly have the Benefit of it, in that in which it was design’d and propos’d for, viz. Our Justification agreeable to the Gospel-Covenant.

I have recited this Passage at large, because it contains a brief Summary of what is commonly offer’d by those who by Righteousness, understand a perfect Conformity to the Law of God; and who assert the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness in the strict and rigid Sense.

And since in answer to the following Queries, I shall have occasion fully to shew, that his Explication of the Apostle’s Words is wholly built upon a wrong Notion of Evangelical Justification, and a wrong Sense of that common Phrase of *the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness to us*, I shall refer the Reader thither at present. And now proceed to consider in what Sense the Apostle’s Assertion, that *Faith is imputed to us for Righteousness* is to be understood, without the need of supposing any such harsh and unusual Figure in the Words.

I have before suggested, That there is a Righteousness that respects the Sanction of a Law, consisting in a Freedom from the Penalty and Right to the Reward of it. Such a Righteousness as a guilty Rebel is restor’d to, when by an Act of Grace and Indemnity, he is exempted from the Capital Punishment, which, by the Law, he was obnoxious to, and reinstated in the Rights and Privileges of a Loyal Subject.

Now if we understand by Righteousness here, that Right to Impunity and Life which God’s Act of Grace restores us to, or Justification consider’d as our Privilege by virtue of that Act of Grace; the sense of the Apostle’s Words is obvious and clear, viz. That our Faith (taken in the comprehensive sense above-mention’d) is reckon’d, or plac’d to our Account, for (or unto) Righteousness [*ἡ δὲ δικαιοσύνη*], i. e. as the

appointed and accepted Condition of our Interest in this blessed Privilege of Right to Impunity and Life, according to the Tenour of that Act of Grace, the Gospel-Covenant, or Law of Faith. ’Tis accounted and accepted by God as the Performance of that Condition, upon which the Law of Faith as the Rule of Judgment, frees us from deserved Condemnation, and gives us an initial Right to the promis’d Reward of Eternal Life. But then it must be consider’d, That the Righteousness of Christ, which consists in his perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation, is the only valuable Consideration on the account whereof, such an Act of Grace is pass’d in our Favour, and consequently the only meritorious, or procuring Cause of that Right to Impunity and Life, which that Act of Grace instates us in. Of which I shall have Occasion to treat more in the following Dissertation, concerning that Phrase *the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness*. And had the Writers, on this Subject, taken Righteousness in this Sense, they had been under no Temptation to contradict the very Words of the Apostle, and by mistaking the obvious sense of them to strain them (by unnecessarily supposing an uncommon Trope and Figure) to a Sense he never intended, and which is inconsistent with his plain Doctrine in reference to this Article †.

As to the last Paragraph in that fore-going Assertion which I have been examining, viz. That *Faith justifies a Sinner, only as an Instrument whereby he receives Christ and his Righteousness*, I refer the Reader to what I have already said in the Second DISSERTATION, where I have shewn, that receiving Christ in all his mediatory Offices does virtually include Repentance, or Conversion from Sin to God and Holiness, and is no otherwise the appointed Means of our obtaining Justification consider’d as our Privilege. But for that unscriptural Phrase of *receiving his Righteousness itself*, besides the utter Impropriety of it, it is founded upon a false Sense of another unscriptural Phrase, *The Imputation of it*. And this is what I next propose to consider.

DISSERTATION IV.

Query 4th, *In what Sense that Phrase so commonly us’d, viz. The Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness to us, may be so understood as to render it agreeable and consonant to the Doctrine of the Gospel; and in what Sense it may be so taken as to be subversive of it in its native Consequences?*

In order to the Resolution of these two Queries, it will be necessary first to state the true Notion of *Christ’s Righteousness*.

I know no sober Writers that ever understood by this Phrase the essential Holiness or Rectitude of his divine Nature. All seem agreed to understand it of his Righteousness consider’d as the Mediator of the New

† Even Dr. Edwards himself, tho’ he warmly espouses the rigid Sense of *the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness*, yet expounds this Phrase of *Faith being imputed to us for Righteousness* as I have done. He rejects the common Exposition of those, who by Faith understand the Object of Faith, viz. *Christ’s Righteousness apprehended by Faith*. “He tells us, that Faith being oppos’d to Works is strictly and properly taken for the Grace of Faith, and consequently cannot be meant of the Object of it, *Christ’s Righteousness*. That we may then understand (saith he) the meaning of these Words, *Faith is imputed to us for Righteousness*, we must know that there is a Higher and Lower Imputation. The Former is that of *Christ’s Righteousness*, The Latter is that of Faith. There is an Imputation with respect to Christ, And there is another in regard of Believers. The Apostle speaks of the Latter, and informs us that according to the new Covenant, the Covenant of Grace, Believing is that which is requir’d of us on our Part unto Justification. For here by Righteousness is meant Justification, as I shall fully satisfy the Reader afterwards”. See *Treatise of Faith and Justification* p. 304. Had that learned Dr. as duly consider’d in how extensive a Sense Faith is taken, and in what Sense ’tis oppos’d to the Works of the Law, he had never run into his wrong Notion concerning *the Imputation of Christ’s Righteousness*.

Covenant. And as such a Righteousness of his must refer to some Law as the Rule of it, so the true Notion of the Righteousness of Christ is his perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation. He tells us himself, that he came down from Heaven, not to do his own Will, but the Will of him that sent him. And this is the Will of him that sent me, that of all which he hath given me I shou'd lose nothing, but shou'd raise it up at the last Day, and this is the Will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him may have everlasting Life, and I will raise him up at the last Day. John vi. 38, 39, 40. To the same purpose he tells us, that he sought not his own Will, but the Will of him that sent him. John v. 30. And the inspired Writer to the Hebrews applies those prophetick Words of the Psalmist to him, *Lo I come, in the Volume of the Book it is written of me, I delight to do thy Will, O my God, yea, thy Law is written in my Heart,* Ps. xl. 7, 8.

This Law of his Mediation oblig'd him, who was in the Form of God to empty himself, and take on him the Form of a Servant, Phil. ii. 6, 7. It oblig'd him to reveal to us the Mind of God, and the admirable Counsels and Purposes of his Grace for our Redemption and Salvation by him. And therefore he tells us, that the Doctrine he published, was not his Doctrine, but that of him that sent him. John vii. 16. And again John xii. 49, 50. *I have not spoken of my self, but the Father which hath sent me, he gave me a Commandment what I shou'd say, and what I shou'd speak. And I know that his Commandment is Life everlasting, Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak.* And accordingly he appeals to the Miracles he wrought, as the publick Credentials of his divine Mission and of the Truth of his Doctrine.

This Law of his Mediation obliged him to fulfil all Righteousness in our Nature, by yielding a sinless Obedience to the moral Law. Partly, because he cou'd not have been an acceptable and becoming High-Priest for us; if he himself had not been holy, harmless and undefiled, and herein separate from Sinners; nor cou'd his precious Blood have been available to expiate our Guilt, if he himself had not been a Lamb without Spot or Blemish. Partly, because the spotless Holiness of his Life, was designed to be the Exemplar and Pattern which all his Disciples and Followers were to imitate as far as the Imperfection of their present State admits. And chiefly, because his sinless Obedience to that moral Law, which is the invariable Rule of our Duty, was requisite to repair the Honour, and vindicate the Wisdom and Equity of that Law, which we had so greatly dishonour'd by our manifold Violations of it.

This Law of his Mediation especially oblig'd him upon his own voluntary Consent, to substitute himself so far in our Place and Stead, as to offer up himself a spotless Sacrifice to expiate our Guilt, and obtain for us Redemption, even the forgiveness of Sins. It oblig'd him to bear our Sins, i. e. the Punishment of them) in his own Body on the Tree, and to make his Soul an Offering for them.

It oblig'd him for declaring the vindictive Righteousness of God in the Remission of sin, and the rendring that Remission consistent with the Honour of it, To suffer the Just for the Unjust, and to give his own inestimable Life a Ransom for ours. And therefore when our Saviour represents himself as the good Shepherd that would lay down his Life for his Sheep, he tells us, *This Commandment he had received from his Father,* John x. 15, 18. This was one eminent part of the Will of God he came to do, even to offer his Body once for all, to put away sin by that truly expiatory Sacrifice of himself, that has superceded all the Typical Sacrifices of the Mosaick Law. And, to add no more His humbling himself so far, as for our sakes, to submit himself to Death, even to the (painful, ignominious, accursed) Death of the Cross, is represented as the most eminent Act of his Obedience to the Will of his Father, Phil. xi. 8.

Having thus largely explain'd the true Notion of the Righteousness of Christ, viz. As the perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation; a Law peculiar to himself, which none else was either capable, or oblig'd to perform: I come now to consider, in what sense this Phrase of his Righteousness being imputed to us, ought to be understood, to render it consonant to, and consistent with the Doctrine of the Gospel, in reference to this Article of Evangelical Justification.

Now there is an allowable Sense of this Phrase. (For, as to the Phrase itself, I should be glad if any Man would shew it me in the Bible, tho' I do find the following Sense of it plainly there.)

Christ's Righteousness (i. e. his perfect performance of the Law of his Mediation, may be in this Sense said to be imputed to us, that his perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation is the only valuable Consideration, on the account whereof, a gracious God has passed that Act of Grace, or Law of Faith in our favour, by which he restores those that were once guilty Sinners, but are now believing and sincere Penitents, to a State of Favour and Acceptance with him, by pardoning their past Guilt, and giving them a Right to Eternal Life: And is reputed and accepted by God as the meritorious or procuring Cause of these excellent Benefits to those that are qualify'd to partake of them, as that Act of Grace does require. This is a Truth so clearly asserted both in the Old Testament, and especially in the New; and so directly opposite to the false Sentiments of the Unbelieving Jews, who utterly rejected the Doctrine of Christ's Mediation, and thought their external observance of the Ceremonial as well as Moral part of the Law of Moses, was sufficient to recommend them to the Favour and Acceptance of God, and to merit the Reward of Eternal Life, as a Reward of Debt and not of Grace; and so contrary to the Sentiments of the Judaizing Christians themselves, who still thought their observance of the carnal Rites of the Ceremonial Law necessary to their acceptance with God, that, I presume, it will be readily granted by those that carry the Notion of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness much higher, and give a very different sense of it, which I now come to examine.

Others not content with this Explication of this human Phrase of Christ's Righteousness being imputed to us, lay down their Sentiments in the following Scheme.

They suppose, We must have a perfect Righteousness, (i. e. a sinless Conformity to the preceptive part of the Law of God) made some way our own, wherein to stand before God, and to be accepted by him, under the Notion of perfect Fulfillers of his Law. We have perform'd no such sinless Obedience to the Law of God in our own natural Persons, all our Obedience being imperfect and defective. And therefore we have not what they call any justifying Righteousness of our own. To supply the want of this, they further suppose, That Christ voluntarily undertook, with the Father's Consent, to become the same Person in a Law-sense with all the Elect. And that God regards and accepts that sinless Obedience which Christ perform'd to the divine Law, as the same thing as if they had perform'd it in their own natural Persons, being perform'd by one who by his own Allowance became their Legal Proxy, or strict Representative. That God therefore transfers this Personal Righteousness of Christ to them, and regards it as the same thing with their own personal Performance of his Law. He makes it to become in a Law-sense, their own personal Righteousness, by his imputing to them what Christ did, and accepting it as much, and to the same Ends and Purposes, as if it had been done by themselves.

Now I take this rigid Sense of the imputation of Christ's Righteousness to us, to be not only destitute of any solid ground in the holy Scriptures, but in the native Consequences of it subversive of the Gospel

spel, and of the true Doctrine of our Justification revealed there.

To make good this Charge against the above said Scheme, I shall

First, Lay before the Reader the Consequences which the *Antinomian* Writers draw from it, which yet the most of those who agree with them in the fore-mention'd Scheme, utterly disown, and shall consider how far they appear to be natively drawn from it.

Secondly, I shall shew, That this Notion of *Christ's Righteousness*, being in this latter Sense, imputed to us, has no Foundation in the holy Scriptures.

Thirdly, I shall shew how entirely subversive it is, of the genuine Doctrine of the Gospel, in reference to this Article of *Justification*.

First, I shall lay before the Reader, the Consequences which the *Antinomian* Writers draw from this Scheme, which yet most of those Writers, who agree with them in it disown, and shall consider how far they appear to be natively drawn from it.

The Consequences which the *Antinomian* Writers draw from this Scheme are such as these.

If *Christ's* perfect Obedience to the divine Law be in a Law-sense, and in the Acceptance of the Law-giver, the same thing with our sinless Obedience in our own natural Persons, Then say the *Antinomian* Writers, our *Justification* either was from Eternity, or at least, commenc'd from the time of *Christ's* Performance of his sinless Obedience. That we are justify'd before we believe, That our Faith is no more than a Persuasion, That we are justify'd already. That God sees no sin in his Elect, nor is displeas'd with them for it. That it cannot hurt them. That a Believer has no need to pray for Pardon. That he is to eschew no Evil for fear of Punishment, nor to do any Good for hope of Reward.

And to our Shame be it spoken, some Writers that disclaim the Name of *Antinomians*, have yet vented such absurd Assertions as these, "That Pardon is rather the Condition of Faith, and much more having a causal influence thereto, than Faith and Repentance are of Pardon. That as to the Elect, there was never any Guilt upon them in the Judgment of God. That *Justification* is before *effectual Vocation*. The Doctrine of *Justification* before Faith is not an Error, but a great and glorious Truth. That *Justification* in regard of Application must be before Believing. A Believer is to work from Life, and not for Life. That the Gospel is not the Rule of Judgment, but the Law only. We, through *Christ's* Righteousness, have a Right to Glory by *Adam's* Covenant. It were easy to multiply Expressions of the same vile sound, even us'd by such as would take it ill to be call'd *Antinomians*.

And truly, as far as I can judge, the *Antinomian* Writers reason much better from this Scheme, than many that yet agree with them in it.

Christ has long since perform'd sinless Obedience to the divine Law. And if this be in a Law-sense, and in God's Acceptance, reckon'd to us the same thing as our Personal Obedience would have been, I do not see that there needs any Qualification on our part, as the Condition of our Interest in it. Nor can I see what occasion there is for those to pray for Pardon, who are suppos'd by *Christ*, as their allowed Proxy, to have perform'd an unfinning Obedience from their Birth to the End of their Lives. And as such who in their Legal Person, have perform'd such sinless Obedience during their whole life have an immediate Right to the actual Possession of the Reward of Eternal Life, I see not any thing needful to be done by them as a Means to obtain the actual Possession of it. These *Antinomian* Assertions, above recited, and those used by others that are unwilling to go under that Denomination, appear to

me to be fair and genuine Deductions from the fore-mention'd Scheme.

And therefore I proceed,

Secondly, To shew, That this Scheme has no Foundation in the Doctrine of the Gospel, relating to our *Justification*.

As for the first Principle of this Scheme, That we must have a perfect Righteousness (i. e. a sinless Conformity to the Preceptive part of the divine Law) some way made our own, wherein we may stand before God, and be accepted by him, under the Notion of perfect Fulfillers of his Law, 'tis utterly untrue, because it supposes either the Law of Innocency made with *Adam*, or the *Mosaical Law of Works*, to be the Rule of God's judicial Dealings with us, and supposes us to be justify'd according to the Tenour, and upon the Terms of the Law of Works, instead of being justify'd according to the Tenour and upon the Terms of the Law of Faith, or the Gospel Covenant. We do indeed need the Merits both of *Christ's* Obedience and attoning Sacrifice, to obtain for us that Act of Grace by which God, upon our Faith and Repentance, gives us a Right to Impunity and Life. But we have no need to have that perfect Obedience and Satisfaction made in a Law-sense our own, in order to our reaping these invaluable Benefits thereby. Nor can his Obedience or Suffering be reckon'd our own, in any other than that improper sense of the Fruits and Effects of it becoming ours, by the gracious Grant of the Gospel-Covenant. The Person of the Mediator was never, in a Law-sense, the Person of any that he mediates for, nor was regarded by God as such. The Law of his Mediation was peculiar to himself, and his own sinless performance of it, was never accounted or accepted by God as our performance of it. Nor did he act as strictly our Legal Proxy, either in his Obedience or Sufferings. And those grossly mistake the Sense of the inspired Writers that assert it. As will appear from a short view of these Passages that are most plausibly alledg'd to this purpose.

Some argue for this rigid Notion of Imputation from that Passage in the Old Testament, wherein they suppose *Christ* to be styl'd the Lord our Righteousness, Jer. xxiii. 6. But what Sense can we make of it, if we should render it, the Lord, our perfect performance of the peculiar Law of his own Mediation. Whereas if we admit an usual Figure by which the Effect is put for the Cause, and by Righteousness, understand a Right to Impunity and Life, the sense is plain and easy.

And that we should do so, is evident from that parallel Passage of the Apostle Paul, wherein he tells us, That *Christ* is made of God to us, Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, 1 Cor. i. 30.

'Tis undeniable, That the Effect by an usual Metonymy is here put for the Cause, and the Meaning is, That *Christ* is made of God, the Author of these several precious Benefits to us. He is not made Wisdom to us, by giving us his personal Wisdom to be ours; nor *Justification* by giving us his personal Holiness to become ours; and the same may be said of final Redemption. What then shall we understand by his being made the Author of Righteousness to us. Is he the Author of his own Performance of the Law of his Mediation, in those two Instances of his perfect Obedience and attoning Sacrifice; and the Author of it to us, by making these two Instances of his Obedience to become, in a Law-sense, ours, or (as some speak) transferring them upon us. How uncouth and absurd must such a Sense of the Words appear? But if we take Righteousness for that great Gospel Privilege of right to Impunity and Life, the Sense is easy and natural, That he is the Author of it to us, and that by the Merit of his own sinless Obedience, and attoning Sacrifice, on which that Act of Grace is founded, that conveys to us this Right to Impunity and Life.

Life, upon our compliance with the gracious Terms of it.

Thus when the same Apostle saith, *By the Obedience of one, many were made righteous*: 'Tis not by his Obedience being made in a Law-sense their Obedience, that many were made perfect Fullfillers of the divine Law, but many were made *righteous*, with respect to the sanction of it, freed from its condemning Sentence, and entitled to the Privileges and Reward of the Law of Faith.

But the Text that seems chiefly insisted on by the Advocates for this Scheme is that of the inspired Writer to the *Hebrews*, who tells us, That our Blessed Saviour is made the Surety of a better Covenant, Heb. vii. 22.

And here forgetting or overlooking, That Christ is made the Surety of a better Covenant, which is the very same Thing with his being call'd in the next Chapter the Mediator of it, They run away with the general Notion of Surety, and carry it so far as to make him a Surety in the Covenant made with Adam in the State of Innocency, or the Covenant made with the Jews at Mount Sinai, (to which latter, the inspired Writer certainly refers, when he calls the Gospel Covenant, the New or better Covenant) some make him an antecedent Surety in the Covenant made with Adam in Innocency, As if the Tenour of it had run, *Thou shalt obey, or thy Surety for thee; Thou shalt die, or thy Surety for thee*. Others content themselves with making him only a Subsequent Surety, by putting himself under the Obligations of that Covenant, both to obey and suffer as our Legal Proxy. And they tell us, That under this Notion of our Surety, he fully discharged our Debt, both our Debt of Obedience and our Debt of Punishment. Whereas if he fully discharged our Debt of Obedience, and his Discharge of it was the same Thing in a Law Sense, and in God's Estimation as if we had discharged it our selves, There was no Occasion at all of his Suffering to discharge us from the Debt of Punishment we ow'd to divine Justice. For the divine Law never requir'd both from the same Person.

Now all these groundless Speculations arise from their supposing the inspired Writer to have employ'd the Word Surety in the strictest Sense that Word is capable of in the common Use of it among Men; and especially in their overlooking what Covenant the inspired Writer asserts him to be made Surety of. None can reasonably doubt, but he intends by the better Covenant, neither that Covenant made with Man in his State of Innocency, nor that Covenant of peculiarity with the People of Israel at Mount Sinai, which latter is unquestionably, that which the inspired Writer calls the First and the Old Covenant, and which he supposes to be now superseded and succeeded by that new and better Covenant of which our Lord Jesus is constituted the Mediator and Surety. See Heb. ix. throughout.

'Tis therefore the Gospel-Covenant that our Lord Jesus is the Surety of, And as this Expression is nowhere us'd, but in this one Place, We have no Ground, nor indeed any Occasion to suppose any more intended by it than by that parallel Expression of his being the Mediator of it. His being the Mediator of it includes his Transactions with God on our behalf, to render him reconcileable to us, upon Terms consistent with the honour of his Justice and Government, by giving himself a Ransom for all, and shedding his Blood to obtain the Remission of our Sins; as well as his Transactions with us, in order to bring us to be reconciled to him, by laying down our Enmity by wicked Works, and returning to our dutiful Subjection to his rightful Authority. To that end he publishes the Offers of Reconciliation, accompanies them with the internal Operations of his Holy Spirit, and gives us the fullest Assurance, that the Promises of Pardon and Acceptance with God shall be made

good by the prevalency of his perpetual Intercession.

In the very same Sense the inspired Apostle asserts him to be the Surety of this better Covenant. He is Surety on our behalf with an offended God, by his voluntary Undertaking to make full Attonement for our Guilt by giving his Life a Ransom for our's, that to the Glory of his vindictive Justice, and the Right of his Government and the Honour and Majesty of his Law should suffer no diminution, by an Act of Grace in favour of all that by Faith in his Mediation return to God by him. And he is a Surety on God's behalf to us, that the Promises of Pardon and Acceptance made on God's part will be actually fullfill'd to us upon our compliance with his Conditions of Peace; Those Promises being founded on the Merit of his Obedience and Satisfaction, and the performance of them secured by his perpetual Intercession. And therefore those Promises are said to be in him, *Yea*; and in him *Amen*, made with all sincerity on God's part, and certain in their Accomplishment. 2 Cor. i. 20. Some alledge to the same Purpose that noted Passage of Apostle Paul. Phil. iii. 8, 9. *Yea, doubtless and I count all Things but Loss, for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all Things, and count them but Dung, that I may win (or gain) Christ; And be found in him, not having my own Righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is thro' the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith*.

From these Words they argue to this Purpose, That we must have a perfect Righteousness, wherein we must stand before God, and be justified as perfect Fullfillers of his Law. The Apostle here renounces his own Righteousness which is of the Law, and desires to be found in Christ, having Christ's Righteousness made his, as reviv'd by Faith, that Righteousness of Christ, which by God's imputing it to us becomes Ours; And we are justify'd thereby as perfect Fullfillers of the Law by him as our legal Proxy.

That this Sense they would put on the Apostles Words was never intended by him, will fully appear if we duly consider the Context. He is here cautioning his Converts at Philippi against those Unbelieving Jews, whom he calls *Evil-Workers* and the *Conscience*. These oppos'd Christianity, and plac'd all their confidence in Circumcision, and other external Observances of the Law. As to them, The Apostle tells his Philippian Converts, That if such ritual Observances were a just Ground of Confidence, concerning Acceptance with God, He could carry his Pretensions as high, or higher than they. *He was circumcised the 8th Day. He was of the Stock of Abraham, and the Tribe of Benjamin* (that beloved Son of Jacob his Father.) *He was an Hebrew of the Hebrews*, (both his Parents, and probably all his Ancestors being such by Birth.) *He was touching the Law a Pharisee* (i. e. One of the strictest Sect that made the highest Pretension to a rigid Observance of the Ceremonial Law, and even of the Traditionary Precepts of their Elders, which they reckon'd a Fence of the Law.) And such was his intemperate Zeal for the ritual Observances of the Law, that it prompted him to persecute the Church of Christ, as supposing his Disciples to be Revilers of the Law, and that Christ himself pretended to destroy the Temple, and to change the Customs that Moses had deliver'd to them. Acts vi. 13, 14. And he adds, *Touching the Righteousness in the Law blameless*. He cannot here mean, That as to the inward and real Righteousness which the Moral Law prescrib'd, He was blameless in the sight of God (For that were to have asserted a downright Falshood, And such a Righteousness would have enabled him to claim the Reward as of Debt, not of Grace) He intends only that he was in the common Estimate of his Countrymen a blameless Observer of the Ceremonial Law, and free from any such notorious Breaches

Breaches of it as they were wont to censure in their judicial Courts.

Having thus recounted all these external Privileges and Performances he might value himself upon, and trust in more than most others, He tells the *Philippians* that he accounted them all but *Loss* for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord, and the greater Gain of securing an Interest in him, *In whom he desired to be found, Not having his own Righteousness which is of the Law* i. e. Either that external Conformity to the Ceremonial Law, in which he confided while he was a self-justifying Pharisee, Or that Right to Impunity and Reward which he once thought this external Righteousness would enable him to claim. But he now desired to be found in Christ, *having that Righteousness which is thro' the Faith of Christ* (i. e. That Right to Impunity and Life which the Law of Faith founded on the Mediation of Christ instated him in) *The Righteousness which is of God by Faith*, (i. e. That Right to Impunity and Life which God by the Law of Faith conveys to all that believe in his Son, and comply with the Terms on which this great Blessing and Privilege is tendered to them in his Gospel.)

That the *Former* is that *Righteousness of his own*, which the Apostle here disclaims his Trust in for Acceptance with God, is manifest from the whole Context, And particularly from his styling it *Confidence in the Flesh*, (An Expression he frequently uses to denote the Ceremonial Observances of the Mosaic Law.) And especially from his counting it but *Loss* and *Dung* (or *Offals* *σκυβαλα*) that he might gain Christ. For he could not be supposed to speak in so contemptuous a Strain concerning that sincere Conformity of Heart and Life to the Moral Law, which is in it's own Nature absolutely necessary to render us meet Objects of God's gracious Acceptance, and to our being made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life. 'Tis true indeed he did disdain any Pretension to such a Conformity to the Moral Law as could fully answer the Demands of it, and make the *Reward to be of Debt, and not of Grace*. And so must every true Christian do from a just Sense of the Imperfection of his best Obedience. But he was so far from accounting a sincere Conformity of Heart and Life but *Loss* and *Dung* that he might gain Christ, and Right to Impunity and Life by him, that in the Words that immediately follow, He desires to know the Power of his Resurrection and Fellowship of his Sufferings, and to be made conformable to his Death, (viz. By dying to Sin, and walking in newness of Life) that he might be duly qualify'd to derive from him this great Privilege of Right to Impunity and Life according to the Tenour of the Law of Faith. And that Law of Faith requires no such sinless Righteousness from us in which we may stand accepted before God under the Character of sinless observers of his Law. And 'tis by that Law we are justify'd.

But least a late Writer who has taken Occasion to appear in defence of this Scheme (which I take to be the real Foundation of Antimonianism) should think himself neglected by taking no Notice of the scriptural Evidence he pretends to have brought for it, I shall take a little pains to examine what he has offered in the large Citation presented to the Reader.

He is undertaking to vindicate the Reverend Compilers of a certain publick Confession and Catechism for inserting a Proposition in it, *in terminis* contradictory to the Words of the Apostle, viz. That the *Act of believing is not imputed to us for Righteousness*, Or, as the Catechism has it more fully, *Neither the Grace of Faith nor any Act of it are imputed to us for Justification*. He was told, That this expressly contradicts in Words what the Apostle Paul asserts, *That to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifies the Ungodly, His Faith is imputed for Righteousness*. Rom. iv. 5. I have fully shown already that

the Apostle by *Faith* does certainly intend either the *Habit* or *Act* of it, or rather both. He himself owns, That there is a contradiction in Words tho' not in Sense between the Apostle's Assertion and theirs; and cites several Passages of Scripture in which he thinks the Words are contrary, but not the Sense. And supposes that to be the Case, where he thinks the Compilers of the Confession and Catechism intended the same thing with the Apostle, while they *in terminis* assert the contrary. It will be needful therefore to consider particularly how he proves this, tho' the Compilers of the Confession and Catechism have not themselves explain'd in what Sense they took the Apostles Words to be true, and in what Sense to be false. Let us then hear and consider what he offers. To this Purpose he tells us:

"Faith here (i. e. in the Text Rom. iv. 5.) is not to be understood *materially*, but *relatively* and *organically*, in relation to Christ the Object of Faith. And that is the *Righteousness* truly and really imputed to us, and not Faith for another Righteousness. For the Righteousness of Christ, and a Righteousness of ours would by a two-fold Imputation be joyned in the Business of Justification, which I take to be far less reconcileable with the Doctrine of the Apostle, than the Words of the Confession are with his.

Ans. The real Sense of this Writer's Words (when stripp'd of his logical Phrases of *materially* and *relatively*, or *organically*) appears to be this, That 'tis neither the *Habit* nor *Act* of Faith that the Apostle asserts to be reckon'd to us for *Righteousness*; (which is true enough, if by *Righteousness* he understands a sinless Conformity to the preceptive part of the Law of God.) But that the Righteousness of Christ being the Object which our Faith receives. This Righteousness of his is by God imputed, or reckon'd to us, and by that Imputation becomes ours; so that we are thereby justified as perfect Fullfillers of his Law; tho' not in our *Natural Persons*; yet in Christ as our *Legal Proxy*.

But this I have shewn he built upon a false Sense in which some have us'd that Phrase of *Christ's Righteousness being imputed to us*. For his Performance of that part of the Law of his Mediation that oblig'd him to fulfill all *Righteousness*, (or to yield a sinless Obedience to the Moral Law in our Nature for the reparation of its injur'd Honour) is not accounted by God our Performance of it. 'Tis neither properly given us to be ours, nor receiv'd by us as ours. But is to be regarded by us as concurring with his attoning Sacrifice, to be the valuable consideration of God's passing that *Act of Grace*, whereby guilty but repenting Sinners are restor'd to his Favour, and to the Hope of eternal Life. And as accepted by God in our Favour as the meritorious or procuring Cause of that Right to Impunity and Life which that Act of Grace invests all in that become the duly qualify'd Objects of his Mercy. And 'tis no otherwise imputed to us then as 'tis accounted by God to be the procuring Cause of these excellent Benefits. So that we have no such sinless Conformity to the preceptive Part of the Law of God of our own; nor of any others made by any Act of God our own; for if we had, the Law of Innocency, not the Law of Faith, would be the Rule of Judgment, according to which God proceeds in our Justification; which is quite contrary to the Apostle's Doctrine. And the Law of Faith requires no such perfect Conformity to the preceptive Part of the Divine Law as the Condition of our Justification.

The above-mention'd Writer goes on thus: "For then the Righteousness of Christ; and a Righteousness of ours wou'd by a twofold Imputation be join'd in the business of Justification.

Ans. The Writer might have consider'd, That Faith's being imputed to us for *Righteousness*, is the Assertion of an inspir'd Apostle; but that of *Christ's Righteousness*

Righteousness

Righteousness being imputed to us, is an human Phrase that no where is to be found in all the inspired Writers. But to let that pass, if *the Righteousness of Christ's being imputed to us*, be taken in the only true Sense that Phrase will admit, this *twofold Imputation* is so far from being an absurdity, that without it no Man can be justify'd. Christ's perfect Performance of the Law of his Meditation must be so far accepted in our favour, as to procure for us such an Act of Grace whereby we are upon our compliance with the Terms of it, freed from Condemnation, and made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life. And our Faith (in its comprehensive Sense) must be accepted by God as the performance of those Terms on which that Act of Grace gives us a Right to Impunity and Life. And without this *twofold Imputation* no Man will ever be justified; this is easily reconcileable with the Apostle's Doctrine; but his Explication of the Apostle's Words, is neither reconcileable with the Words, nor with the real Sense of them.

The Writer goes on thus: "It is certain there is no such Imputation of Faith for Righteousness, as that the Grace or Actings of it are become our Righteousness, in consideration, and upon account of which God justifies us. We are not by believing made Righteousness to ourselves, nor is Faith so imputed as to be made our Righteousness."

Ans. If by *Righteousness* he mean a sinless Obedience to the Law of God, Faith is never imputed to us for such a sinless Obedience, and much less is it the valuable Consideration, or meritorious Cause of that Act of Grace by which we are justify'd. For that Honour is peculiarly due to Christ's Performance of the Law of his Meditation, both by his sinless Obedience and atoning Sacrifice. None assert, That by believing we are made perfectly conformable to the divine Law, or that Faith is imputed for such a perfect Conformity to it: For *the Law of Faith* requires no such sinless Conformity in order to our being justify'd, but supposes us to be Sinners that have no pretension to it.

He goes on, "But Jesus Christ is made of God Righteousness to us, and by his Obedience it is we are made Righteous, i. e. as upon our believing we have it imputed to us."

Ans. I have already shown, That in the former Text he refers to, *Righteousness* is not to be understood of perfect Obedience to the preceptive part of the divine Law; but of Right to Impunity and Life. I have also shown, that 'tis in the same Sense that we are made Righteous by his Obedience, i. e. freed from Condemnation and entitled to Life. And must here refer thereto.

Again saith this Writer, "Thus in our Justification we are made the Righteousness of God in Christ, not in ourselves, or any thing that is our own; for such a Dispensation of Grace wou'd be inconsistent with Grace, and suppose two sorts of Imputation not capable of composition."

Ans. If this Writer still understand by *Righteousness* sinless Obedience to the divine Law; how strangely will this sound, That we are made the sinless Obedience of God to his own Law in Christ. It will look too like Blasphemy; but I doubt not he means, that God has made Christ's sinless Obedience to be in itself ours. And so we are justified by it under the Notion of Persons that have by Christ (as in a Law-sense the same Person with us) perform'd such sinless Obedience. But how will he be able to reconcile this with the foregoing Words, *That he made Christ to be Sin for us*, (or as the Original may be rendered, *a Sin Offering*.) For if his sinless Obedience be made by any Act of God ours; we had no need of a Sin-Offering or Sacrifice, being accepted by God as perfect Observers of his Law by Christ, as allow'd by God himself to be our legal Proxy in what he did. How much more natural is either of the two Interpretations offer'd of that Text, either that *God made him who knew no Sin, a Sin-Offering for us*, that he might

on the account of Christ's atonement, absolve us from the guilt of it. Or he treated him as if he had been a Sinner by requiring from him this Oblation of himself as our Propitiatory Sacrifice, that he might treat us upon our Faith and Repentance as if we had never offended! How much more agreeable to the whole strain of the Gospel are either of these Interpretations, than that which Dr. Crisp, (that noted Antimonian Writer) gives us in these Words: "Mark it well, Christ himself is not so completely Righteous, but we are as Righteous as he. Nor are we so completely sinful, but Christ became, being made Sin, as sinful as we. Nay more, we are the same Righteousness, for we are made the Righteousness of God. That very sinfulness we were; Christ is made that very sinfulness before God. So that here is a direct change, Christ takes our Person and Condition, and stands in our stead; and we take Christ's Person, and stand in his stead." I know not how this Writer will like the Doctor's Interpretation of Christ's being made Sin for us; but if he will stick to the rigid Notion of Imputation, Dr. Crisp by the help of it will defend his, as well as this Writer can the Sense in which he understands our being made the Righteousness of God in Christ. And I might quote some other Authors, (that disown the Name of Antimonians) who yet to countenance their Interpretation of this last Clause of the Text, tell us in reference to the former, That Christ was in the Estimation of God a Sinner, and was accounted a Criminal in Foro Poli. Expressions that appear at first view very harsh, and need many Grains of allowance, and very softening Explications to keep them from bordering on Blasphemy. For what this Writer adds, "That we are made the Righteousness of God in Christ, not in ourselves, or any thing that is our own." To wholly founded on his mistaken Sense of the Apostle's Expression, and upon a wrong supposition that we must have a perfect Righteousness made ours to be justify'd by it under the Notion of sinless Persons. And the Reason he adds, viz. "That such a Dispensation of Grace, wou'd be inconsistent with Grace, and suppose two sorts of Imputation not capable of Composition." This Reason I say is wholly founded on his grand Mistake, as if any Asserted Faith to be imputed for a perfect Conformity to the Law of God, and for Righteousness in that Sense, and is of no manner of force against the Sense of that Phrase of the Apostle's, as above-mention'd. But his strict Notion of Imputation is truly inconsistent with the Grace of God in our Forgiveness, by rendering forgiving Grace unnecessary and superfluous. For he that has a sinless Righteousness made his own, stands in no need of Pardon, nor of any Atonement to procure it. And if this Writer would attentively consider in what Sense I allow his human Phrase of *the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness to be true and consonant to the Scripture*, and in what Sense our Faith is said to be imputed to us for Righteousness, he would see that these two sorts of Imputation are not only entirely consistent with one another; but both must necessarily concur in our Evangelical Justification by the Law of Faith. For in short, it amounts to this, God must accept Christ's Performance of the Law of his Meditation in our favour, and on the Merit of it pass an Act of Grace. And we must by Faith (taken in its comprehensive Sense) be qualify'd to derive from it that great Evangelical Blessing of Right to Impunity and Life.

This Writer thus proceeds, "Faith therefore is not our Righteousness before God, but the Righteousness of God which is by Faith, as the Apostle explains himself, Phil. iii. 9. And when he speaks of Faith, as imputed to us for Righteousness, there is a Figure manifest in the Words, which Tropologia is not unusual in holy Writ. Hence the meaning is not, That Faith is accounted our Righteousness as the Confession declares. But the Apostle speaks

“ speaks of it with a reference to the Righteousness
“ of Christ, which, as we apprehend by Faith, is
“ imputed to us, and made our's. And we accord-
“ ingly have the Benefit of it; in that which it was
“ design'd and is propos'd for, viz. Our Justificati-
“ on, agreeable to the Gospel Covenant.

Ans. If by *Righteousness before God*, he understands
a sinless Conformity to the preceptive part of his
Law, Faith is no such Righteousness. And our E-
vangelical Justification itself, supposes us to have been
Sinners, and ungodly; and such as are justify'd by a
gratuitous Act of forgiving Grace, which we should
not need at all, if we had perform'd sinless Obedience
either in our natural Persons, or by any other as
reckon'd by God, in a Law-sense, the same Person
with our selves. *The Righteousness of God by Faith*, is
that Right to Impunity and Life, which he by his
Gospel-Covenant gives to all penitent Believers. And
not *Christ's Righteousness*, as made in a Law-sense ours.

As to the Figure he pretends to be in that Expres-
sion of *Faith being imputed to us for* (or unto) *Righte-
ousness*, I have already shewn him, it admits a plain
and natural sense agreeable to the strain and scope of
the Gospel, without the least Occasion of supposing
such an harsh and uncooth Figure, which is founded
on a false Supposition, That we must be justify'd un-
der the Notion of perfect Fulfillers of the Law, by
the sinless Obedience of Christ, made by strict Im-
putation *our own* Obedience to it.

The following Words of the Writer run upon the
same false Supposition, viz. “ Hence the Meaning is
“ not, That Faith is accounted our Righteousness,
“ as the Confession declares, but the Apostle speaks
“ of it in reference to the Righteousness of Christ,
“ which, as we apprehend by Faith, is imputed to
“ us, and made Ours: And we accordingly have the
“ Benefit of it in that which it was designed, and is
“ purpos'd for, viz. Our Justification agreeable to
“ the Gospel-Covenant.

Ans. None assert, That Faith is accounted our
sinless Conformity to the Law of God. Nor are we
justify'd at all upon the Terms of the Law of Works,
either by any such sinless Conformity to it, we have
yielded our selves, or by any such sinless Obedience
of another, made our own by any such strict Impu-
tation as the Writer intends. 'Tis no genuine Act
of Faith at all, to apprehend Christ's own Performance
of that Branch of his Law of Mediation. And if no
more be meant by apprehending it, than our reliance
on the Merit of it as the Foundation of that Act of
Grace whereby we are restor'd, by Pardon, to the
Favour of God, and entitled to eternal Life. This
Reliance does not make his Performance to be in a
Law-sense our Performance. We indeed reap this
Fruit of his Performance of his Law of Mediation,
both in his sinless Obedience and atoning Sacrifice;
that for the sake of it, as the only valuable Consid-
eration, a gracious God, by the *Law of Faith*, or *Cov-
enant of Grace*, restores us to a state of Favour and
Acceptance with him, whenever we become the ca-
pable and meet Objects of his Grace and Mercy.
And his Performance is no otherwise Ours, in itself,
and can no other way be call'd Ours, than as we par-
take of this blessed Effect and Fruit of it. And there
needs no Imputation of it in the rigid Sense the Wri-
ter contends for to our deriving this great Advantage
and Benefit by it. The Law of Faith is properly
the *Instrument or Deed of Gift*, by which this Benefit
is convey'd to us.

The Writer may therefore see that the Intraints
scruples instead of being removed, are much strengthen'd,
by his advancing a wrong Notion of *Evangelical
Justification*, and a false Sense of the *Imputation of
Christ's Righteousness*, and confidently pretending to
deliver both as the real Sense of the Compilers of the
Confession and *larger Catechism*. For if this be the
real Sense of the Expressions they use in delivering
this Article, they find few that have thoroughly stu-

died the New Testament willing to give their Assent
to them; and much less willing that an Assent to them
shou'd be made a necessary Condition of Entrance
into the Ministry. And since he openly declares and
pleads for Non-Communion with such a decline Sub-
scription to them, if he intends it as he has explain'd
them, he does in my Judgment in effect plead for
Non-Communion with such as understand the Do-
ctrine of the Gospel in this Article, much better than
himself, and who are free from a great many palpa-
ble Errors and Mistakes about it, which he has un-
happily run into.

This Writer is pleas'd to cite some Authors, as
speaking in the like strain with himself, and might no
doubt have cited many more, if these Debates were
to be determined by Authorities. I must tell him I
cou'd cite many late Protestant Divines on the other
Side, and oppose not only Mr. Baxter (whom he is
pleas'd unjustly and invidiously to class with the Ar-
minians) but Mr. Corbet, Mr. Trueman, Mr. Wood-
bridge, Mr. Humphreys, Sir Charles Wolsey, Dr. Stil-
lingfleet, and among foreign Divines Messrs. Claude
and Le-blanc, and oppose them to Dr. Kendal, Dr.
Tully, Dr. Owen, Mr. Lyford, Mr. Burgess, Mr.
Troughton, &c. And I apprehend the *Former* wou'd
suffer nothing by being compar'd with the *Latter*, as
to the Solidity of their Judgment, and the Diligence
of their impartial Enquiries into the true Sense of the
inspired Writings. But that must be left to the Jud-
gment of their Readers

I therefore proceed to shew,

Thirdly, That this Scheme founded on the rigid
Sense of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, is
entirely subversive of the Doctrine of the Gospel in
its native Consequences, tho' I am far from imputing
those Consequences to such as disown them.

I. This Scheme Renders Christ's Satisfaction to
the Justice of God, by offering up himself as our ex-
piatory Sacrifice needless and superfluous.

The divine Law never subjects any to Punishment,
who are regarded and accepted by God any way as
perfect Fulfillers of it. They may have transgress'd
it in their *natural Persons*; but if another by God's
own Appointment, is constituted their legal Proxy,
and his sinless Obedience to the Law be in God's
Account, and by an Act of strict Imputation made
their *personal Obedience*. Then after such an Act of
Imputation, no Sins committed by them in their *natu-
ral Persons*, can be any longer charg'd upon them as
Theirs, and as a noted Writer (tho' no profess'd *Anti-
monian*) speaks, *As to the Elect, there was never any
Guilt upon them in the Judgment of God*. And this shews
the Confusion that those run into, who supposing
Christ to be in the strictest Sense our *surety*, assert him
to have both discharg'd our Debt of *perfect Obedience*,
and our Debt of *Punishment* too. Whereas he that
has fully discharg'd the Debt of Obedience by ano-
ther, as a legal Surety, can never be liable to the
Debt of Punishment. For the penalty of a Law
never extends to any that are justified as perfect Ful-
fillers of it by one that God himself has constituted
their legal Proxy, made his sinless Obedience to be-
come theirs by his own Act of Imputation. We need
indeed both the Merit of Christ's sinless Obedience
and Satisfaction too to obtain for us that Act of
Grace, by which we are pardon'd and entitled to
Life upon our Compliance with the gracious, and in-
deed necessary Terms of it. But if his sinless Obedi-
ence be made by a strict Imputation in a Law-sense
our *personal Obedience*, we need no Satisfaction to
atone for the past Obedience of our *natural Persons*.

2. This Scheme of theirs is subversive of the Gos-
pel-Doctrine of Forgiveness.

For he that is accounted and accepted as a sinless
Observer of the Law, by one that in a Law-sense,
and by God's Allowance and Estimation was the same
Person with himself, stands in no need of Forgiveness
for what he may have done in his natural Per-
son,

son, and is only dealt with according to the sinless Obedience of his legal Proxy, whose Obedience was perfect and sinless from his Birth to his Death, and whose Performance of it is suppos'd by God's Act of Imputation, to be made theirs, whose strict Representative he was. And therefore as far as I can see the Antinomian Writers very justly infer from this rigid Notion of Imputation, *That God sees no Sin in Believers, That there never was any Guilt upon them in God's Judgment, that they have no occasion, or need to pray for the Pardon of it.* And how this can be reconcil'd with that perfect Pattern of Prayer which our Lord has taught us, that directs us as much to pray for the daily *Forgiveness of our Trespases* as for our daily *Bread*, the Favourers of this unscriptural Scheme, wou'd do well to consider. And how this can be consistent with the constant Practice of all Christian Churches, as well as private Christians, who are wont in their publick Assemblys, their Families, and their secret Devotions to implore divine Forgiveness, needs to be resolv'd by the Patrons of this Scheme. For sure the meaning of those Prayers, is not barely that God wou'd manifest our Pardon to our own Consciences. For desert of Punishment inseparably attends all Sin. For Sins of Ignorance, meer inadvertency or involuntary Infirmary Gods Act of Grace provides for their Pardon, upon a general *Repentance*. For Sins that are wilfull a particular Pardon upon our particular *Repentance* and forsaking them; and as to both, we need to sue for Pardon. And this is God's appointed Means of our obtaining it.

3. This Scheme weakens the force of those powerful Motives which the Gospel sets before us to persuade us to Holiness of Heart and Life.

The Gospel manifestly supposes to us to be reasonable and free Agents plac'd in a state of Trial, and Probation for the Rewards and Punishments of a future State. And accordingly makes use of a great variety of Arguments to dissuade us from all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to persuade us to live righteously and soberly, and godly in this present World. And those Arguments are suited to those various Passions of human Nature, that are the usual Springs of our moral Actions. Sometimes it uses Arguments to work upon our *Fears*; and such are all Threatnings of eternal Punishment it denounces, against all Unbelieving, Impenitent and finally disobedient Sinners, against all that refuse to believe this Gospel, or to obey it when publish'd to them. Sometimes it makes use of Arguments proper to work upon our *Hopes*; and such all those exceeding great, and precious Promises furnish us with, which assure us of God's gracious Acceptance and liberal Reward of our sincere and persevering Obedience. Sometimes it makes use of Arguments proper to work upon our *Ingenuity* and *Gratitude*; and such are those that are drawn from the manifold Blessings of common Providence, but especially from the Consideration of the unexampled and astonishing Love of our heavenly Father, and of our blessed Saviour manifested in the great Work of our Redemption and Salvation.

Now whatever persuasive force the Defenders of this Scheme may suppose to be in the Arguments proper to work upon our *Ingenuity* and *Gratitude*, yet their Scheme enervates the force of all those that are proper to work upon our *Fears* and *Hopes*, those two powerful Springs of our moral Actions. For he that has already satisfy'd divine Justice by one consider'd and allow'd to be his *legal Surety* is fully secure from all Danger of Punishment for Sins committed in his *natural Person*; and he that has perform'd sinless Obedience by the same *legal Surety*, whose Performance of it is by Imputation made and accepted as his, has an immediate Right to the Reward, and has nothing to do as any appointed Means to obtain the actual Possession of it. And therefore not only do the Antinomian Writers make these their favourite Maxims, *"That Sin can do a Believer no hurt, and that God is not displeas'd with him on the Account of it."* That

"he must work from Life, and not for Life, (i. e. must not yield sincere Obedience as an appointed Means to obtain it) That the Holiness of his Life, is not one part of the Way to his Salvation. But even other Writers that disclaim the Title of Antinomians, yet thro' this mistaken Sense of the Imputation of Christ's Righteousness, adopt the same false Maxims. "I could mention such as tell us, That to talk of a Gospel-Threat, is a Cataphresis at best, and nothing else can save it from being a Bull. That we thro' Christ's Righteousness have a Right to Glory by Adam's Covenant. That to teach that a Christian upon the Adornings of Graces, and performance of Duties, may by the Virtue of the Promises made to those Graces or Duties, expect any of those promised Blessings, is to teach a low and servile Spirit."

How shall we ever reconcile such strange Assertions as these, with the whole strain of the Gospel Revelation? Is that solemn Threatning, *Hesbat believeth not shall be damned*, no part of the Gospel that our Saviour commissioned to his Apostles, *preach*? Are all the Threatnings denounced against such as continue in the habitual Practice of such Sins as are mention'd (Gal. v. 19, 20. &c. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10 — Col. iii. 5. — Rev. xxii. 15, and innumerable other Places) no part of the Christian Revelation? Are the divine Promises no proper Motives to incite us to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the fear of the Lord? Are we in vain urg'd to fight the good Fight of Faith, that we may lay hold on eternal Life, to strive to enter into the strait Gate, and to walk in that narrow way (of Holiness) that leads to Eternal Life? Are we in vain exhorted *so to run the Christian Race that we may obtain the heavenly Prize? Or to work out our own Salvation with a cautious Fear and Trembling*, humbly relying on divine Grace to work in us both to will and to do of his good Pleasure? To seek for Glory, Honour and Immortality by patient Continuance in well-doing? Or, to do the Commands of God, that we may have Right to the Tree of Life? Are we in vain exhorted to a cautious preventive Fear, lest a Promise being left us of entering into that Rest, that remains for the People of God, any of us shou'd seem to fall short of it? It were easy to multiply Passages both from the Old, and especially the New Testament of the same strain. But how entirely must the persuasive Energy of them be lost, if our inculcating them as Motives to a religious and holy Life, be no better than the teaching a low and servile Spirit? And how manifest an Affront is it to that Holy Spirit by which the inspir'd Apostles were guided, to suppose that they propos'd such low and servile Motives to induce us to a course of sincere and persevering Obedience?

4. This Scheme goes upon this false Supposition, That the Law of Works, and not the Law of Faith, is the Rule of Judgement by which God acts in our Justification. Which is entirely contrary to the Apostle's Doctrine in reference to this Article.

But of this I shall have Occasion to treat more fully in the following Dissertation.

DISSERTATION V.

Quest. V. **W**Hat that Law of Faith is, by which we are justify'd, as oppos'd to the Law of Works, and how all Boasting is excluded thereby?

As to the Former Part of the Query, I take the right Understanding of this Distinction the Apostle makes, between the Law of Faith, and the Law of Works, to be the true Key to lead us to right Apprehensions concerning his Doctrine in reference to this important Article.

The Apostle in his Epistle to the Rom. Ch. iii. having told us that all (both Gentiles and Jews) have

finned, and fallen short of the glory of God, and can be no otherwise justify'd than freely by his Grace thro' the Redemption that is in Christ and puts this Question, Where is Boasting then? He answers, 'Tis excluded. He again puts the Question, By what Law is it excluded? By the Law of Works? Nay, But by the Law of Faith.

'Tis therefore of great Importance to understand what he intends, by the Law of Faith as here oppos'd to the Law of Works.

To clear this I must premise, That nothing is more common in the known Style of the New-Testament than to represent the Administration of the divine Government, especially in reference to the Church, as now in the Hands of our Lord Jesus, under the Notion of the Kingdom of God, and often of the Kingdom of Heaven. This is entirely consonant to the Predictions of the Prophets concerning the Messiah, To that of Daniel, I saw in the Night-Visions, and behold one like the Son of Man came with the Clouds of Heaven, and came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him Dominion and Glory, and a Kingdom, that all People, Nations, and Languages, should serve him; His Dominion is an everlasting Dominion that shall not pass away; And his Kingdom that which shall not be destroyed. This Prediction was in part accomplished by the Conversion of the Gentiles to the Faith and Obedience of Christ, and will yet receive a more compleat Accomplishment, when upon the Conversion of the Jews the Fullness of the Gentiles shall be brought in, and the Kingdoms of the World shall become (more universally) the Kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ (or, Anointed King.) See the Rom. xi. throughout compared with Rev. xi. 15. and Rev. xvii. 14. and Rev. xix. 16.

This was agreeable to that remarkable Prediction of the Prophet Isaiah ix. 6, 7. For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given, And the Government shall be on his Shoulder, and his Name shall be called, Wonderful Counsellor, The mighty God, the everlasting Father (or, as some choose rather to render it, The Father of the Age to come) The Prince of Peace. Of the Increase of his Government and Peace there shall be no End; Upon the Throne of David, and upon his Kingdom to order it, and to establish it with Judgment and Justice from henceforth and forever. The Zeal of the Lord of Host will perform this. And I might here cite the Prophecy of the Royal Psalmist himself to the same Purport. Ps. xi. throughout. For that this Prediction refers to the Messiah is not only acknowledged by the ancient Jewish Writers, but is hence evident, That King who is here said to be set by God on his Holy Hill of Zion, and is by way of distinguishing eminency styl'd his Son, is he, to whom it is said, Ask of me, and I will give thee the Heathen for thine Inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the Earth for thy Possession. A Prediction no way accomplish'd in the literal David. See also Psalms lxxii. and cx. besides many other Passages in the ancient Prophets which I need not now enumerate.

To manifest, That these illustrious Predictions were to be accomplish'd in our Lord Jesus as the promised Messiah, he not only frequently in his Lifetime styles himself (according to Daniel's Prediction) the Son of Man, but owns himself to be the King of Israel, And that he had a Kingdom, tho' not of this World. That the Father had appointed him a Kingdom. Luke xxii. 29. That the Father had given him Power over all Flesh, that he should give eternal Life to as many as he had given him. John xvii. 2. And that the Father judgeth no Man (i. e. immediately by himself) but hath committed all Judgment to the Son, That all Men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. John v. 22, 23. One Branch of which honour is submitting to that Authority and Government that is delegated to him by the Father. And

after his Resurrection he more fully declares, That all Power in Heaven and Earth is given to him. And pursuant to this Power given him, He commissions his Apostles, to go, and Disciple all Nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and to teach them to observe all things whatsoever he had commanded them. And promises to be with them to the end of the World. Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.

The Apostles pursuant to their Commission declare to the Jews, That God had made that Jesus whom they had crucify'd both Lord and Christ, That he had exalted him with his Right-hand to be a Prince and Saviour, to give Repentance to Israel, and Remission of Sins. Acts xi. 36, Acts v. 31. They declare to the Proselytes of the Gate (those first Converts out of the Gentile-World, That Jesus Christ was Lord of all, And that he was ordain'd of God to be the Judge of the quick and dead. Acts x. 36. and 42. v. They declare the same to the Idolatrous Gentiles in their endeavours to proselite them to the Christian Faith, and captivate them to the Obedience of Christ. They represent our Lord Jesus to them as the Head of his Church (an Head of Government as well as Influence) and the Head over all things to it, An Administrator of that Providential Kingdom over the World, whereby he renders it subservient to his special Government over his Church. And they represent the converted Gentiles, as now delivered from the Powers of Darkness (by whom they had been before blinded and enslav'd) and translated into the Kingdom of the dear Son of God. Col. i. 13.

Now this Kingdom of Christ does necessarily imply both his being a Law-giver to his Church, and the Judge of all that are subjected to his Government.

And we may observe, That the Apostle Paul speaking of his condescension in all things lawful to both Jew and Gentile in order to gain them, and particularly in reference to the Gentiles that were not bound to the Mosaic Law that he behav'd himself as without Law (i. e. not subject to the peculiar ceremonial observances of it,) Least any should thence unreasonably infer his being a Lawless Person, adds, being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ. 1 Cor. ix. 21. And the same Apostle elsewhere speaks of our fulfilling the Law of Christ. Gal. vi. 2. And 'tis this Law of his Kingdom that our Saviour call's his Yoke which is easy (or gracious and kind *χρηδός*) and his Burden which is Light. Matt. xi. 30. And this is what the Apostle James calls the perfect Law of Liberty. 1 James 25.

The Reader may perhaps think this large Account of the Kingdom of Christ an unnecessary Digression from the Subject under our present Consideration; but he may be fully convinc'd of the contrary, when it shall appear, That the Law of his Kingdom is that very Law of Faith, which the Apostle supposes us to be justify'd by as oppos'd to the Law of Works.

And there is a greater necessity of setting this Kingdom of Christ in a true Light, because some Writers that yet disclaim the Appellations of *Antinomians*, have thro' their mistaken Zeal for that Scheme of the rigid Imputation of Christ's Righteousness vented such pernicious Assertions as these, "That Christ's Precepts are not Laws with a Sanction. That the Gospel is not a Rule of Judgment, but the Law only. That the Gospel is not any part of the Rule of Judgment at the last Day; that's only the Law of Creation". Assertions that are in their direct and unavoidable Consequences plainly subversive of the Gospel of Christ's Kingdom, whether the Authors of them discern it, or (as I would in Charity hope) see it not. And this will appear in what follows.

In the Law of Christ's Kingdom, we may distinctly consider the Preceptive part which is the Rule of Duty, And the Sanction of it that is the Rule of Judgment, i. e. of Rewards and Punishments.

The

The preceptive Part of it includes the whole Moral Law, i. e. such Precepts of it as are founded upon the Nature of God, and the Nature of Men; as they stand related to God, and to one another; such as the Duties of Piety, Righteousness, (in its just Extent, and inclusive of Charity, according to our Saviour's comprehensive Rule, of doing to others as we would they should do to us,) and Sobriety, or a due Government of our Appetites and Passions. To these are added Faith in the Mediation of Christ, Repentance towards God, and all positive Precepts, such as that which enjoins our being baptiz'd in his Name, as well as that of the Father and the Holy Spirit; and our Celebration of his Supper, in order to our shewing forth his Death till he come. And other Precepts relating to the due Order of religious Assemblies, and the due Exercise of christian Discipline. And even these Precepts we are virtually bound to obey, by that Moral Law that obliges us to believe, and obey whatever is by supernatural Revelation discover'd to us, and enjoyn'd as our Duty.

And the Moral Law itself, consider'd barely as the Rule of Duty, is invariable, and changes not by any Change of Man, with respect to his State of Innocence, or his lapsed State. It still constitutes entire and full Obedience to be our Duty.

But if we consider the Sanction of the Law of Christ's Kingdom, we find it most mercifully accommodated to the Weakness of our lapsed State; and as it is the Rule of Judgment, there is a great Abatement with respect to Rewards and Punishments, of what his Law still requires as our Duty. By the Sanction of that Law, our Repentance towards God, and Faith in the Mediator, are, (through the Merits of Christ's Obedience and Sacrifice,) made the Terms of our being restor'd to the Favour and Acceptance of God, by pardoning our past Guilt, and giving us an initial Right to eternal Life. And with respect to the preceptive Part of Christ's Law, as the Rule of Duty, our Sincerity in our Obedience to it, will be accepted instead of sinless Perfection, in order to the Continuance of our Right to Impunity and Life, and our Perseverance therein, in order to our actual Possession of eternal Life, as a Reward of Grace, and not of Debt. And the Threatnings of it expose none to eternal Condemnation, but the unbelieving, the impenitent, and finally Disobedient. And this Sanction of the Law of Christ's Kingdom, these Promises and Threatnings of the Gospel, will be the final Rule of Judgment at the great Day of Christ's glorious Appearance, with respect to all to whom it has been publish'd.

That this is really the Sanction of the Law of Christ's Kingdom, that these are the Promises and Threatnings contain'd in it, can, (one would think) be doubted by none that ever impartially read the Gospel. Can any Language be more plain than that which the Gospel uses, *He that believeth on the Son of God, shall not perish, but have everlasting Life. He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting Life. And he that believeth not on the Son, shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.* And will do so, while he refuses to comply with the Terms of this remedying Law of Grace, *John iii. 15, 16, 36. He that heareth my Word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting Life, (i. e. both a Right to it, and that spiritual Life that is the Seed and Principle of it,) and shall not come into Condemnation, but is passed from Death to Life, John v. 24.* Is not this a brief Summary of the Gospel of his Kingdom, which he commissioned his Apostles to preach, *He that believeth, and is baptiz'd, (i. e. with that Baptism that consists in the Answer of a good Conscience towards God, or, that implies a sincere Consent of Heart to the Terms of the Baptismal Covenant,) shall be saved, he that believeth not shall be damned.* And that our Saviour lays an equal Stress upon Repentance, as the necessary Means of our Restoration to the divine Favour, appears from his Commission to the same A-

postles, recorded by the Evangelist Luke, wherein he requires them to preach Repentance and Remission of Sins in his Name to all Nations, Luke xxiv. 47. And this is the Sum of his Commission to the Apostle Paul in Particular, when sent by him to the idolatrous Gentiles, *To open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness unto Light, and from the Power of Satan to God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and an Inheritance among them that are sanctify'd by Faith in Christ Jesus, Acts xxvi. 17, 18.* And we may observe, in all the Sermons which the Apostles preach'd, and in all the Epistles they wrote, they exactly follow'd these Instructions. What is the Language of the Apostle Peter to the Jews, when they put that solicitous Question, *What shall we do?* Is it not, *Repent, and be baptiz'd every one of you, in the Name of Jesus Christ; (and that supposes Faith in his Mediation;) and ye shall receive Remission of Sins, Acts iii. 37.* And again, *Acts iii. 19. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of Refreshing shall come from the Presence of the Lord.* It were easy to multiply Passages in the Book of Acts, as well as in the Writings of the Apostles to this Purpose, if it were needful in so plain a Matter. And that our sincere Obedience to the Commands of Christ is an appointed Means of our Continuance in a State of divine Favour and Acceptance, is evident both from the Necessity of it in the Nature of Things, to render us the qualify'd and capable Objects of God's continued Favour and Approbation; and from the Constitution of Christ's Kingdom, who thus exhorts his Disciples, to *Continue in his Love*, and adds, *if ye keep my Commands, ye shall abide in my Love, even as I have kept my Father's Commands, and abide in his Love, John xv. 9, 10.* 'Tis true, indeed, that in the dangerous Relapses that Christians, (in the main sincere) may be betray'd into, they are not excluded by the Gospel, from the Benefit of sincere and deep particular Repentance, and Faith in the Redeemer's Blood, in order to their renewed Pardon, as we may clearly infer from *1 John i. 8, 9, and ii. 1.* But were their voluntary Return to an habitual Course of known and presumptuous Sinning supposable, (as it is in itself possible, if restoring Grace did not interpose to prevent it,) their State of Favour and Acceptance with God would be wholly interrupted, by their being utterly unqualify'd for so great a Privilege; and 'tis in order to the Prevention thereof, that they are so often caution'd against drawing back, and assur'd, that *If they should, God would have no pleasure in them, Heb. x. 38.* And that a Perseverance in a Course of sincere Obedience, is the appointed Condition of our actually inheriting that heavenly Felicity, that is the promised Reward of Grace in this Law of Christ's Kingdom, is so evident from the whole Strain of the Gospel, that to cite all the Passages in it that are full to this Purpose, were to distrust any ordinary Reader's Acquaintance with them, to suppose he could be ignorant of so plain a Truth: The Reader may, if he please, cast his Eyes upon the following Ones, *Mat. xxiv. 13. Rom. ii. 7. Rev. ii. 10. Rev. iii. 5. and 21.*

That this Sanction of the Law of Christ, i. e. the conditional Promises and Threatnings of it, shall be the Rule of final Judgment, is manifest from what our Saviour himself has told us, *If any Man hear my Words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the World, but to save the World.* (He here speaks of what was his Errand, and Business in his present humbled State,) *He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my Words, hath one that judgeth him at the last Day, John xii. 47, 48. q. d. The Gospel I now came to preach, and which is to be the standing Law of my Kingdom, shall be the Rule of the final Judgment.* And in that final Judgment, the grand Cause to be try'd, in order to the Acquittal, or Condemnation of those that have heard it, will not be, Whether

Whether they have perfectly obey'd the Law of God, or whether Christ has by the Merit of his own sinless Obedience, and Sacrifice, obtain'd Pardon and eternal Life for them, upon more favourable and gracious Terms? But whether they have by Faith in Christ, as their only Mediator, return'd to God by unfeigned Repentance, and walk'd before him in a Course of sincere and persevering Obedience? 'Tis upon the Resolution of this important Question, that the final decisive Sentence of Christ will pass.

Now this *Law of Christ's Kingdom*, is the *Law of Faith*, here intended by the Apostle; and 'tis call'd the *Law of Faith*, because 'tis the Law publish'd in that Gospel Revelation, which is the Object of our Faith; and because *Faith* itself, (in that extensive Sense of it, I have in a former Dissertation explain'd,) is the comprehensive Condition of our Interest in all the promised Blessings of it, that relate to this, and a better Life: Even that *Faith* that is inclusive of unfeigned Repentance and Conversion to God, and is the vital Principle of sincere Obedience to the particular Laws of Christ's Kingdom.

This *Law of Faith*, is the same Thing with that new, and everlasting Covenant, which Christ himself is the Mediator of. The Promises contain'd in that Covenant, belong to this *Law of Faith*, as the Sanction of it. The Duties to which our Consent is required in that Covenant, in order to our being interested in the Promises of it, are the same that the Law of Christ's Kingdom obliges us to, and as to which, by the gracious Sanction of that Law, our Sincerity in the Performance of them, is for the Sake of Christ favourably accepted, and will be crown'd with a Reward of Grace. And if we consider that Covenant, under the Notion of a *Testament*, 'tis to represent the promised Blessings as bequeath'd to us by Christ, as the purchased Fruits of his Death and Sacrifice; and the Terms requir'd by it, as the necessary Qualification of those to whom they are bequeath'd. They are therefore the same Things, under some different Notions and Consideration. And thus the Transaction between God, and the Israelites, at Mount Sinai, is sometimes represented under the Notion of a *Law*, and sometimes under that of a *Covenant*.

Having thus clear'd what the Apostle intends by the *Law of Faith*, I proceed to consider, What the Apostle intends by that *Law of Works*, which it is oppos'd to.

That the Apostle does chiefly intend here the *Law* deliver'd to the People of Israel, at Mount Sinai, can be doubted by none, that read his Epistle to the Galatians, where he distinguishes the Covenant made with Abraham, in relation to that Seed of his, in whom all Nations shou'd be blessed, and, (as he expresses it,) confirm'd before of God in Christ, from the *Law* that was four hundred Years after, which cou'd be no other than the *Law* deliver'd at Mount Sinai. That *Law*, as to the preceptive Part, contain'd both the Ten Commandments, as a compendious Summary of the Moral Law, and a vast Number of positive ceremonial Precepts, relating to the Service of the Tabernacle, and the various Gifts and Sacrifices they were to offer, and to the Priests that were to offer them, and the Distinctions of Days and Meats, and the diverse Washings or Purifications, and other carnal Ordinances, (as the inspired Writer to the Hebrews calls them,) impos'd on them till the Time of Reformation, Heb. ix. 9, 10. And the Covenant God enter'd into with the Israelites, upon the Delivery of that *Law*, was a Covenant of Peculiarity with the collective Body of that People, as separated from the idolatrous Nations round about them, to be a peculiar People to himself. And the Sanction of that Covenant chiefly concern'd that People as a collective Body, under a divine Theocracy, consisting of those temporal Promises and Threatnings mention'd Deut. xxviii.

This *Law* and *Covenant* was never design'd to disannul the *Law* or *Covenant of Grace* that was in force before the Delivery of the *Mosaic Law*. It was intended only as an *Appendix* to it. Partly to Fence and Guard that People against the Idolatrous Customs and corrupt Manners of the Nations round about them. Partly to serve unto an Example and shadow of heavenly Things, or, of good Things to come, (as the inspired Writer to the Hebrews tells us) Heb. viii. 5. ix. 1. And chiefly to be (as this Apostle speaks) a School-Master to lead them to Christ, and by these Rudiments to prepare them for that more full and clear Dispensation of the Gospel, Gal. iii. 24. iv. 3. And this right use of that Covenant of Peculiarity the pious Jews made, who waited for the coming of their Messiah, and that spiritual Blessedness they expected thro' him. But the Body of that unbelieving Nation had in our Saviour's time, and that of his Apostles, separated the *Law of Moses* from the Promise and Covenant made with Abraham, and confirm'd before of God in Christ. They expected a Messiah indeed, but only as the Author of a Temporal Deliverance, not of Spiritual and Eternal Salvation. They expected one that would free them from the Yoke of the Gentiles, and restore them to their full Temporal Liberty and external Prosperity; but not one that came to rescue them from the Guilt and Dominion of Sin, and the Empire of Death, and to bless them by turning them from their Iniquities, and by purchasing for them an heavenly Inheritance.

And they had so high an Opinion of their *Law*, as to the Ceremonial Precepts of it, that they thought them unalterable, and that the Messiah, when he came, wou'd enforce the Observation of them.

As to the Moral Precepts of that *Law* they had overlook'd the Spirituality of them, and by their corrupt Glosses so narrow'd the true Extent of them, that they thought a bare external Observance of the Letter of them to be all that God requir'd. And the bare outward Observance of them, as express'd in the Decalogue, together with their zealous Observance of the Ceremonial Precepts of that *Law*, they thought was every way sufficient to denominate them Righteous Persons, and to recommend them to the Favour and Acceptance of God; and they imagin'd there was such an intrinsic Excellency and Merit in their external Observance of them, as would render the Reward of Debt, and enable them to claim it from the strict distributive Justice of God. And for any Offences against the *Law* they might have been guilty of, they reckon'd their legal Sacrifices a sufficient Expiation of them. And thus by going about to establish this their own Righteousness, they submitted not themselves to the Righteousness of God, i. e. to his Method of restoring guilty Sinners to his Favour by an Act of Grace founded on the Merits and Mediation of the promised Messiah. They sought for Justification by the Works of the *Law*, and not by the Grace of the Gospel. And the *Mosaic Law* deliver'd on Mount Sinai, as thus misunderstood, and perverted from its true uses and separated from that Covenant of Grace which was (if I may so speak) the Spirit and Soul of it, is that *Law of Works*, which the Apostle opposes to the *Law of Faith*, denying our being justified by the former, and asserting our Justification by the latter only.

I here consider the *Law of Works* as inclusive of the Moral as well as Ceremonial Precepts deliver'd to the Israelites at Mount Sinai. For I cannot assent to the Opinion of some late Writers, who suppose the Apostle Paul to dispute only against Justification by the Works of the Ceremonial Law. For he insists on Justification by Works that wou'd render the Reward of Debts as equally impossible to the Gentiles to whom the Ceremonial Law was never given, as to the Jews. And in the charge of Guilt on the Jews, he insists chiefly on their violations of the Moral Law that rendered them obnoxious to the vindictive Justice of God, and made

made their Justification by the strictness of the Law as delivered by *Moses* impossible. As is evident from *Rom. iii. 10, 11, 12, &c.* Justification by any such meritorious Works being inconsistent with the Grace of God manifested in the Gospel, and with the Merit of Christ's sinless Obedience and atoning Sacrifice, as the only valuable Consideration on which that Act of Grace is founded, whereby God pardons our Sins, and gives us a Right to eternal Life.

I now proceed to the second Branch of this Enquiry, viz. How all Boasting is excluded, not by the Law of Works, but by the Law of Faith.

By Boasting, no doubt, the Apostle intends all glorying in ourselves that is oppos'd to our glorying only in the Lord, *1 Cor. i. 29, 31.* All such proud and overweening Apprehensions of our own Worthiness and Merit, as detract from the Glory of divine Grace and Mercy, and from the peculiar Honour due to our blessed Saviour.

Now the false Notions the unbelieving Jews, who sought for Justification by the Works of the Law, plainly led them to such Boasting, or Glorying in themselves, as evidently detracted both from the Glory of divine Grace and Mercy, and from the peculiar Honour due to our blessed Saviour. For what need had they to think themselves indebted to the free Grace of God for the Reward, who reckon'd they might claim it from strict distributive Justice by the intrinsic Excellency to Merit of their Works? And who so entirely ascrib'd the Honour of their pretended good Works to themselves, that that corrupt and arrogant Maxim had generally prevail'd among them, That all things are in the Power and Disposal of Heaven, except the fear of God. For that they believ'd was wholly in their own? What need cou'd they think they had of the Blood of Christ to obtain the forgiveness of any Sins they might be sensible they had committed, who thought their legal Sacrifices a sufficient Attonement for them? And how could they expect eternal Life as the Gift of God by him, and as merited for them by his sinless Obedience, who thought their own Works were sufficient to intitle them to it as a Reward of Debt?

'Tis therefore only by the Law of Faith that all Boasting is utterly excluded.

For to what can we ascribe it but to the most free and undeserved Grace and Mercy, that when we were guilty Transgressors of the Law of God, and liable to eternal Condemnation, he should so love us (with a Love of tender Compassion) when we loved not him, as to send his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins, and require him not only to repair the Honour of his violated Law by his own sinless Obedience to it, but to satisfy the Demands of his Justice by bearing the Punishment of our Sins, and giving his own inestimable Life a Ransom for ours, And that in consideration of his Obedience and Sacrifice (that rendred the exercise of his Mercy consistent with the honour of his Justice) he should pass such an Act of Grace for the Pardon of our manifold Offences, and giving us a right to eternal Life upon the Terms propos'd in his Gospel? Have we any Pretension to ascribe the least Part of the Glory of this rich Mercy and transcendent Grace of God, or of this Mediatory undertaking and Performances of our Blessed Saviour to our selves, when we were in all this prevented by sovereign Mercy without any Motive on our part, nay contrary to our great demerit?

And if it be here Objected, That the Terms on which we are supposed to become actually interess'd in this Act of Grace and in the Blessings promised and convey'd by it, may seem to derogate from the freeness of divine Grace, or from the peculiar Honour of Christ's Mediation, The Objection will appear to be of no force upon the following Considerations.

I. That this no way concerns those admirable preventive Acts of Grace that were exercised towards us without any regard to any Conditions on our Part at all.

It depended upon no antecedent Conditions on our Part, That God should so love us as to provide for us such a Mediator, appoint him to become our expiatory Sin-offering and Sacrifice, and pass such an Act of Grace for his Sake in our Favour, and make therein so exceeding great and precious Promises to us. All these are Instances of unmerited and marvellous Mercy and Good-will to guilty and perishing Sinners.

II. Tho' those two comprehensive Blessings contain'd in these Promises, (viz. The Pardon of our Sins, and a Right to eternal Life) are offer'd on Terms or Conditions antecedently requir'd on our part, (as appears from the Promises of them through the whole New Testament running in a conditional strain) yet this can no way derogate from the Glory of divine Grace, because the Terms or Conditions insisted on are no other than what are absolutely necessary to render us morally capable, or meet Objects to partake of so inestimable Privileges as a Right to Impunity and Life. Repentance towards God is a naturally necessary Condition of our Restoration to his Favour and Acceptance.

And since God has appointed his own Son to be our only Mediator in the Discharge of his Prophetical, Priestly, and Regal Office; and is no otherwise accessible to guilty Sinners but through his Mediation. Our Receiving him as our only Mediator by an unfeigned belief of his heavenly Doctrine, our voluntary subjection to his rightful Government, and humble Affiance in his powerful Mediation is necessary by divine Institution, to render us capable of partaking of all the salutary Fruits of his Mediation, and particularly of these two comprehensive ones, A Freedom from deserved Condemnation, and a Right to the heavenly Inheritance. For it were manifestly inconsistent with the Essential Holiness of God, and the steady regard he has to the Honour of his own Government and Law, to re-admit guilty Offenders to a state of Favour and Acceptance with him, by forgiving their Sins, and making them Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life) without insisting on such Terms as these as the necessary Qualification of all whom he thus justifies. And instead of exalting the Honour of Christ's mediatory Undertaking, it would rather have sullied and stain'd the Glory of it, if such Terms had not been insisted on in that Act of Grace, (or, Law of Faith) which he has procur'd for us. It would no way be for his Honour to interpose his prevalent Mediation on behalf of the incorrigible Despisers of God's Authority, or the final Neglecters of his own great Salvation, freely, but in vain, offer'd to them. I would illustrate this by a parallel Case in human Government, (allowing some necessary Disparities that concern not the Matter under our present Consideration.) Let us suppose a Subject guilty of Rebellious Practices against his Prince, and perhaps long persisted in, to the great Aggravation of his Guilt. Let us suppose his earthly King mov'd by his own native Clemency and Compassion, and willing to pardon him upon the earnest Intercession of his own Son, who has perform'd some signal Services, or expos'd himself to great Sufferings in the Cause of his Royal Father; wou'd it any way derogate from the Clemency of his King, or the Merits of his Son, that in an Act of Grace pass'd for his Pardon, his laying down his Arms, ceasing his Rebellious Practices, and submitting himself to the rightful Authority and Laws of his Sovereign, shou'd be made the necessary Condition of his reaping the benefit of such an Act of Grace? Wou'd it not rather dishonour his Prince's Mercy?

it were extended to him, without any such penitent Submission? Wou'd he not without it be an unfit Person for his Son to mediate and intercede for? The Application, one would think should be obvious to the meanest Understanding.

3. All Boasting does yet more fully appear to be Excluded by the Law of Faith, because our actual Compliance with the Terms, or Performance of the Condition on which these Blessings of Right to Impunity and Life are convey'd to us by God's Act of Grace, is owing to the internal efficacious Operations of the Holy Spirit of God.

And this Consideration does yet more entirely cut off any ground of Boasting or Glorifying in ourselves.

Several Passages of the Apostle Paul are clear and full to this Purpose. Thus in his Epistle to his Converts at Ephesus, speaking of, *the exceeding Riches of the Grace of God in his Kindness to them thro' Christ Jesus*, he adds, *For by Grace ye are saved (i. e. brought into a State wherein they were become Heirs of Salvation) through Faith (as the comprehensive Condition of their Interest in that Salvation;) and that not of your selves, It is the Gift of God, Not of Works, lest any Man should boast; For we are his Workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good Works which God hath before ordained that we should walk in (Or, which God hath before prepared or fitted us to walk in in voluntery.)* And that other Passage in his Epistle to Titus is entirely parallel to this, Where speaking of that Love and Kindness of God our Saviour toward Man that had now appear'd, he adds, *Not by Works of Righteousness which we have done (For he had immediately before represented them as sometimes foolish, disobedient &c.) but according to his Mercy he hath saved us (i. e. brought us into a State of Salvation) by the Washing of Regeneration and Renewing of the Holy Ghost, Which he shed on us abundantly thro' Jesus Christ our Saviour, That being justified by his Grace we should be made Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life. Tit. iii. 3, 4, 5, 6. &c.*

In both these Passages, The Apostle evidently ascribes our Regeneration, or the Renovation of our depraved Nature to the Holy Spirit, and asserts us to be therein *the Workmanship of God*, being made New-Creatures by his reinstamping his own amiable Image upon us, which he elsewhere describes by our putting off the old Man and being renew'd in the Spirit of our Minds, and putting on the New-man which after God is created in Righteousness and true Holiness. And he asserts our Faith it self that radical Principle of all Purity of Heart and Life to be *the Gift of God*. And thence justly infers, That our being brought into a state of Salvation is not to be ascribed to any Works of Righteousness we had done in our unrenewed State, before this Kindness and Love of God appear'd.

To clear this Matter farther, We must distinguish between what the Blessed God does as the merciful Ruler of fallen Sinners in establishing such a Rule of Judgment as the Law of Faith, or, the Gospel-Covenant; And what he does as a free Benefactor, and the Sovereign Dispenser of his own unmerited Gifts. His Acts towards us under the former Consideration are properly Judicial, in which there is no respect of Persons with him. And therefore 'tis every way congruous to the Wisdom of his Moral Government, that in the establish'd Rule of his Government over fallen Sinners, he should treat all according to their different Conduct and Behaviour in accepting or slighting his offer'd Favour; And that the Promises thereof should all run in a conditional Strain; But as a free Benefactor and Dispenser of his unmerited Gifts, 'Tis no way inconsistent with his Justice and Equity that he should use a more absolute Sovereignty and Liberty, and (as the Apostle speaks elsewhere) *have Mercy on whom he will have Mercy and have Compassion on whom he will have Compassion. Rom. ix. 15.* But even as to this Sovereignty, We must observe, That none are deny'd his efficacious Grace who earnestly seek it in

the use of his ordinary appointed Means, That our Blessed Saviour invites *all thirsty Souls to come and drink of this Living Water*, That he represents his Heavenly Father as more ready and willing to give his Holy Spirit to them that ask it, than Earthly Parents are to give good Gifts to their Children; and that the sacred Canon of the New-Testament is clos'd with that general and unlimited Invitation, *Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, Let him take the Water of Life freely. Rev. xxii. 17.* So that none can pretend by way of Excuse for their continued Impenitency and unbelief, that they humbly and diligently sought the efficacious Grace of God in the due use of his appointed Means, and yet fail'd of obtaining it.

But since that Living Faith it self (which is the comprehensive Condition of the Gospel-Covenant) is the Gift of God, and being the Effect of his renewing Spirit; And since that sincere Obedience which springs from it is to be ascrib'd to his continued gracious Aids, There is no reasonable Occasion or Ground left for our Boasting or Glorifying in ourselves. We are entirely indebted to divine Grace and Mercy thro' the Merits of our Saviour's Mediation for the whole of our Salvation. And hence we may see how absurdly those of the Romish Church who so stiffly plead for good Works being truly meritorious of Eternal Life, and even of the Increase of Glory, found this Pretension upon these two Considerations that both utterly overthrow the arrogant Doctrine they would assert, The one is, That *these good Works are perform'd by the Assistance of the Holy Spirit*. But this Consideration instead of making them truly meritorious renders them far less so than if they were perform'd by our own unassisted Strength, and shews it to be more deeply indebted to the Grace of God. The other Consideration on which they found this Assertion is, That *Christ has merited that our good Works should be thus truly meritorious*. But this is no better than a glaring Contradiction. For if our good Works were on the Account of their own intrinsic Worth and Excellency truly deserving of Eternal Life, They needed not the Merits of Christ to render them so. If on the contrary, they bear no Proportion or Equality to that glorious Reward, If it be wholly owing to the Merits of Christ that their Defects are pardon'd and that such a transcendent Reward is propos'd, and bestow'd as a Reward of Grace and not of Debt, All Pretension of their being meritorious of that Reward, and much more of higher Degrees of it is for ever excluded.

On the other Hand, We may hence see how palpably those mistake the Tenour of the Gospel-Covenant, or, Law of Faith, who represent it as Unconditional. As if this Law of Faith which is now the Rule of God's judicial Proceedings towards all to whom it is publish'd, had no Sanction; Or, as if the Promises and Threatnings of it requir'd nothing on our Part in order to our enjoying the Blessings contain'd in the Former, and avoiding the Punishment denounc'd in the Latter. How can any Man read the New-Testament with an unprejudic'd Mind without discerning what is so obvious to every common Understanding! Is that summary of the Gospel so hard to be understood, *He that believeth and is Baptiz'd shall be saved, But he that believeth not shall be damned?* Mark xvi. 16. Can there be any reasonable Doubt about the Sense of those Words of the Apostle Peter, *Repent and be Converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, &c. Acts iii. 19.* (See also Acts ii. 38. Is there any great Difficulty in understanding those Words of the Apostle Paul, *If ye live after the Flesh, ye shall die; But if ye thro' Spirit do mortify the Deeds of the Body, ye shall live Rom. viii. 13.* Or those Rom. ii. 6, 7, 8. &c. Or those of the same Apostle elsewhere, *Whosoever a Man soweth that shall he reap: He that soweth to the Flesh, shall of the Flesh reap Corruption: But he that soweth to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap Life everlasting*

ing. Gal. vi. 7, 8. In short, to enumerate all the Passages in our Saviour's Discourses, as recorded by the Evangelists, or in the Discourses and Writings of the Apostles, that speak the same plain and perspicuous Language, were to recite a great part of the *New Testament*. And can any Man doubt, whether they contain the Terms of our Acceptance with God?

That which seems to have led many good Men into these wrong Sentiments, is their confounding that Gospel-Covenant made with us, of which Christ is the Mediator, with that Transaction between the Father and Him, which some Divines have been wont to call, *The Covenant of Redemption*, (tho' I can no where find it called so in the *New Testament*.) And tho' this gross Mistake runs thro' all the Antinomian Writers, yet I am sorry to find so much Countenance given to it by an unadvised Assertion in a publick Formulary for the Instruction of Youth, publish'd by such as utterly disclaim'd the just Consequences of the Antinomian Scheme. The Assertion I intend is this. The Question is put, *With whom was the Covenant of Grace made?* The Answer is, *The Covenant of Grace was made with Christ the second Adam, and with the Elect as his Seed.*

If the Authors of this Assertion by *the Covenant of Grace*, intended the same Covenant, which is called in the Gospel, *the New Covenant, or Testament*; *the second Covenant* (as distinguish'd from the *National Covenant of peculiarity*, made with the *Israelites* at Mount Sinai,) and which the inspired Writer to the *Hebrews* calls *the better Testament or Covenant*, of which he represents Christ as the Surety or Mediator; The Assertion is not only untrue, but indeed impossible to be true. For one and the same Covenant cannot be made with Christ, and with us.

Our most judicious Divines have always carefully distinguish'd between that Transaction between the Father and our Lord Jesus (which is commonly called *the Covenant of Redemption*) and *the Covenant of Grace made with us*, tho' founded in the voluntary Undertaking of Christ in that Transaction. And by comparing them, it will manifestly appear, They cannot be One and the same Covenant.

In that Transaction between the Father and our Lord Jesus, They suppose a mutual Agreement, in order to our Recovery and Salvation. Now what does the Son of God chiefly undertake in that Transaction? Is it not to repair the Honour of God's violated Law by a sinless Obedience to it? To offer up himself as our atoning Sacrifice, in order to the rendering the exercise of his Mercy to us, consistent with the Honour of his Justice? And to obtain for us an Act of Grace, to pardon our past Offences, and give us a Title to eternal Life? And can any Man think this required from us? On the other hand, What does the Father in this Transaction promise to him, is it not that *upon his thus making himself of no Reputation, and taking on him the Form of a Servant, and so far humbling himself as for our sakes, to become obedient to Death, even the Death of the Cross, he will therefore highly exalt him, and give him a Name above every Name, That at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow, of Things in Heaven, and Things on Earth, and Things under the Earth: And that every Tongue should confess, That Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the Father?* Is it not that *he should see his Seed, and prolong his Days, and the Pleasure of the Lord should prosper in his hands; That he should see the Travel of his Soul, and be satisfy'd, and by his Knowledge should justify many, for he shall bear their Iniquities?* Is it not that *the Father would give him Power over all Flesh, that he should give Eternal Life to as many as the Father has given him?* And can these Promises be made to us, tho' they greatly redound to our Advantage and Benefit?

On the other hand, Let us consider the *Covenant of Grace made with us* (that Covenant under the Bond of which we are brought by *Baptism*, and which we renew at the *Lord's Table*.) Are not the Pardon of our Sins, Adoption into the Family of God, the Gift of his in-dwelling Spirit, and a Right to the heavenly Inheritance, the principal Blessings promis'd to us? And has our Saviour any need of them, or is he capable to receive them? And does not that Covenant require of us, *Repentance towards God, and Faith in our Lord Jesus Christ?* And is he obliged to repent, or believe in himself?

'Tis true indeed, this *Covenant of Grace made with us*, is founded on Christ's voluntary Undertaking in that Transaction between the Father and him: But the Transactions are manifestly distinct, made between distinct Parties, and upon entirely distinct Stipulations or Conditions. Those Stipulations which the Son of God consents to, being such as 'tis impossible for us to perform. And those requir'd of us being such as he is incapable of being oblig'd to. And, as it were, Blasphemy in us to claim what is promis'd to Christ in that Transaction with the Father; so it were Blasphemy against him to suppose that he needed what for his sake is promis'd to us. And therefore to call these distinct Transactions the same Covenant, is to confound what should be carefully distinguish'd for avoiding gross Mistakes.

I also take the latter part of the fore-mention'd Assertion to be a dangerous Mistake, unless it were better worded. viz. *That the Covenant of Grace was made with the Elect as the Seed of Christ.* For Election barely consider'd (as it seems to be in the Answer to the Question) makes no Man the spiritual Seed of Christ, 'till they are by a living Faith, made the living Members of his mystical Body. (As none are by the Apostle Paul, reckon'd among the spiritual Children of Abraham, till they are Imitators of his Faith.) 'Till then we are not in Covenant with God, nor entitled to the Blessings of his Covenant. We may to this purpose observe, That the Christian Converts at Ephesus, are represented by the Apostle Paul, as *chosen in Christ from before the Foundation of the World*, &c. Eph. i. 3. &c. And yet before their Conversion to Christianity, the same Apostle declares, that during their state of Gentilism, They were, at that time, without Christ, Aliens from the Common wealth of Israel, Strangers to the Covenant of Promise, having no hope, and without God in the World, Eph. xi. 12. They should therefore have said, That the Covenant of Grace was made with believing Penitents, as the spiritual Seed of Christ, and not confounded the Gospel Covenant, of which Christ is the Mediator, with that Transaction between the Father and him, which is called the Covenant of Redemption, tho' the former is (as I before observ'd) grounded on the latter.

But the generality of Antinomian Writers carry the Matter so high, as to allow no other Covenant of God made with us, but what they call *the Covenant of Redemption* made with Christ. And a late celebrated Writer among them, has some Years ago publish'd a large Quarto, entitl'd, *Operations of Grace, but no Offers of Grace*. But sure I need not stay to convince any serious and judicious Christian, How entirely such Principles subvert the Foundation of Christianity, and expose it to the Scorn of Infidels, under a groundless Pretence of exalting the free Grace of God, and the Honour of our Blessed Saviour. Tho' I would, in Charity, hope concerning some of these Writers, that their Principles have only reach'd to, and distorted their Heads, without spreading their malignant Contagion to their Hearts and Lives.

I now proceed to the

Vith QUERY.

DISSERTATION VI. & last,

On the following Query:

Query, VIth, **W**Hether *Justification* consider'd as God's Act must be receiv'd as an *Instantaneous*; or a *continued Act*?

I take the Resolution of this Question to be of some Importance and Moment in order to set the Doctrine of Evangelical Justification in a true Light.

'Tis a just Observation of that judicious French Divine Monsieur Claude in his posthumous *Treat* on this Article of *Justification*, that those mistake that gracious Act of God, who represent it as a *momentaneous* One. We are by the Tenour of that *Law of Faith*, which is the merciful Rule of God's judicial Dealings with us, not only admitted into a State of Favour and Acceptance with God upon our first penitent Return to him by Faith in our Saviour's Mediation; but continued in it by bringing forth Fruits Meet for Repentance (or, answerable to Amendment of Life, as the Words are in the marginal Reading) and by such Instances of divine Love as a Living Faith is the operative Principle of. For these genuine Fruits of Faith and Repentance, are absolutely necessary to make us morally capable or meet Objects of God's continued Favour and Acceptance. And therefore true Christians are requir'd to keep themselves in the Love of God. Epistle Jude, and our Saviour requires his Disciples to continue in his Love, and makes our sincerity in keeping his Commands the necessary Condition of our Continuance in his Love. John xv. 9, 10. A true Christian notwithstanding the Sincerity of his Obedience, is yet while in this State of Imperfection liable to many culpable Omissions of his Duty, and Defects in the Performance of it, and to some Sins of Commission which thro' Ignorance or inadvertency he may be betray'd into. A Desert of Punishment is inseparable from the Nature of Sin, and wou'd expose us to it if God shou'd deal with us according to the Rigour of his Justice, and if pardoning Mercy did not interpose for the Prevention of it. Our Sins cannot in any proper Sense be said to be pardon'd before they are committed. And therefore our Saviour in his perfect Pattern of Prayer, has directed us as much to beg the *Forgiveness of our Trespases*, as the giving us our daily Bread. God's pardoning our Sins is therefore a continued Act, which we daily stand in need of the renewed Exercise of. And for this there is sufficient Provision made by the Tenour of the *Law of Faith*, or *Covenant of Grace*, which is the Rule of God's judicial Dealings with us. This the Apostle John clearly intimates to us, when he tells us, *If we say that we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us. If we confess our Sins, (i. e. with the renewed Exercise of sincere Repentance, and humble Application to the Mercy of God thro' the atoning Blood of his Son that cleanses from all Sin) He is faithful and just (i. e. to his own gracious Promise) to forgive us our Sins, and to cleanse us from our Iniquities.* Nor is the Case of a true Christian tho' very dangerous, yet desperate, that falls thro' the Power of Temptation into wilful and presumptuous Sinning. Because upon his Recovery from his Fall, by a particular deep Repentance producing a real Amendment, and a more circumspect Walking with God, he may recover his Peace with God, and be continued in a State of Favour and Acceptance with him. And to such Sins the same Apostle seems to refer in the next Chapter, when he saith, *These Things I write to you that ye sin not. And if any Man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the Righteous, and he is the Propitiation for our Sins, &c.* To his Intercession we must ascribe it

that in that Act of Grace he has procur'd for us, even such Sins when truly repented of and forsaken do not utterly exclude us from a State of Favour and Acceptance with God; tho' till then they deprive us of all comfortable Sense and Persuasion of it, entirely eclipse the Light of God's Countenance, and reduce our Souls to disconsolate Darkness. See Psalm li. throughout.

And this Consideration of our *Justification by God*, being a *continued Act*, opens to us the true and easy Method of reconciling the Doctrine of the Apostle Paul with that of the Apostle James that has been so much debated among Expositors.

Before I enter on that, I think it not improper to examine what has been offer'd by a late Writer who occasionally treats on this Subject, (as well as by many others before him) to shew the Agreement between the two Apostles.

To this purpose he tells us, "That What God hath joined, none must divide, and what God hath divided none must join. He hath separated *Faith* and *Works* in the Business of Justification, according to the Apostle Paul, and none must join them. Even *Faith* as a good *Work* is separated from *Faith* as an *Instrument*. But tho' *Works* are not to be joyn'd with *Faith* as the valuable Consideration upon which we are justify'd by either of the Apostles, yet according to the Apostle James, God hath joined *Faith* and *Works* together in the Lives of justify'd Persons. The one Apostle assures us, that *Works* have no *coefficient* with *Faith* relatively consider'd, in the Business of Justification. The other assures us, that *Faith* and *Works* must have a *Coexistence* in them that are justified."

Now this Method of reconciling the two Apostles, is founded upon too many palpable Mistakes, and confounding Things that should be carefully distinguish'd, to be admitted upon an impartial Examination.

His general Maxim will be readily allow'd, that we must not divide what God has join'd, nor join what he has divided.

And he thus implies it, "God hath separated *Faith* and *Works* in the business of Justification according to the Apostle Paul, and in that Respect none must join them".

Answer, If this Writer by *Works*, understand such as fully answer the Demands of the *Law of Works*, such as by their intrinsic Excellency and Worth, render the Reward of Debt and not of Grace, such as are suppos'd to the Merit of Christ's Mediation, and suppose his Death as our atoning Sacrifice to be in vain, both needless and useless, 'tis most true, that according to the Doctrine of the Apostle Paul, God has divided between *Faith* and such *Works* in the Business of Justification; and none must join them. For we cannot be justified by the Grace of God thro' the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, without renouncing any arrogant Pretension to such *Works* as these. And that these are the *Works* the Apostle excludes in the Business of Justification, is too manifest from his own plain Words, Rom. iv. 4. Gal. ii. 21. Gal. iii. 21. that 'tis some Wonder to me, how an attentive and unprejudic'd Reader can misunderstand him.

But if by *Works* this Writer means all sincerely good Actions, 'tis utterly untrue, that God has divided *Faith* and *Works* in this Sense in the Business of Justification. For then the Apostles Maxime is absolutely untrue, *That to him that worketh (i. e. that according to this Writer performs any sincerely good Actions) the Reward is reckon'd of Debt and not of Grace.* God forbid that any humble Christian shou'd ever entertain so arrogant a Thought as this, or ever imagine that the Apostle Paul (so justly celebrated for extolling the Grace of God) shou'd advance so false an Assertion as this must be, if this were the genuine Sense of it. Even *Faith* it self by which we are so

often said to be justify'd, does necessarily include in the very Notion of it a great variety of such sincerely good Actions. Our Faith as it respects the Mediation of Christ includes our receiving him in all his Mediatorial Offices by an unfeigned Assent to his heavenly Doctrine, and voluntary Subjection to his gracious Government, and an humble Affiance in his powerful Mediation. Faith as it respects God the Father, includes our Return to him by Jesus Christ as our only Mediator, our crediting the Veracity of his Promises by him, and our reliance on his Mercy, his Faithfulness and Power for the Performance of them. All these are sincerely good Actions, necessarily included in the Nature of true Faith and inseparable from it; and all of them absolutely necessary to render us capable of being admitted into a state of Favour and Acceptance with God, by his pardoning our Sins and entitling us to eternal Life, in any way consistent with the essential Holiness of his Nature, or a due Regard to the Honour of his own Government, or even the true Glory of his Grace and Mercy, which wou'd be dishonour'd, if it were exercis'd in a manner that wou'd cast a Stain upon his other Perfections.)

But the above-mentioned Writer has found a Salvo for this by telling us, "That even Faith as a good Work is separated from Faith as an Instrument."

Answer, Such surprizing subtilty in distinguishing between Faith as a good Work, and as an Instrument, I am fully persuaded never entred into the Mind of this blessed Apostle, nor has the least Foundation in his Epistles, wherein he treats this Subject. Let any Man read the Description of Abraham's Faith, Rom. iv. and consider, whether 'tis separated from it self as a good Work, whereby he eminently gave Glory to God. This Writer might as well have told us, that Faith as concern'd in our Justification is separated from its own most essential Acts, even such without which it wou'd not consist with the Wisdom and Holiness of God, and with the Honour of his Law and his rightful Authority to justify us.

But I wish this Writer had told us, what he means by Faith as an Instrument, when thus distinguish'd from Faith as a good Work.

If he means a moral Instrument, whereby we receive Christ himself in all his mediatorial Offices, I have shown him, that Faith thus consider'd necessarily includes several sincerely good Actions; and all these must according to him be excluded from any concern in our Justification, as if they were unnecessary to render us the duly qualify'd Objects of divine Favour.

If by Faith as an Instrument he mean (as many of those Writers he follows do) Faith as an Instrument whereby we receive Christ's Righteousness as given to us to be ours in it self, I have already shown under the IVth Dissertation, that Christ's Performance of the peculiar Law of his Mediation is never given by God to us to be our Performance of it. And therefore cannot be receiv'd by us as our Performance of it. And 'tis no Act of Faith at all requir'd from us to receive it, so as that we may become Proprietors of it. And thus the Writer has wholly excluded true Faith it self from any Concern in our Justification at all, and left no Faith that the Gospel mentions to stand in opposition to Works.

This Writer thus goes on, "But tho' Works are not to be join'd with Faith as the valuable Consideration upon which we are justify'd by either of the Apostles, yet according to the Apostle James God hath join'd Faith and Works together in the Lives of justify'd Persons."

Answer, Neither Faith nor Works are join'd together as the valuable Consideration upon which we are justify'd. This Honour peculiarly belongs to Christ's perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation by his sinless Obedience and atoning Sacrifice. And

neither Faith it self nor any Acts of sincere Obedience that flow from it, have the least Share therein. And I readily agree with this Writer, that they are not join'd by either of the Apostles as such a valuable Consideration, or meritorious Cause of our Justification. And I as freely agree with him, that God has (according to the Apostle James) join'd Faith and Works in the Lives of justify'd Persons. But not Works in the Sense of the Apostle Paul, viz. such as render the Reward to be of Debt, and make Christ to have died in vain. For by Faith justify'd Persons disclaim all Pretensions to such Works as these.

The above Writer thus concludes, "The one Apostle assures us, that Works have no coefferency with Faith, relatively consider'd, in the Business of Justification; the Other assures us, that Faith and Works have a Coexistence in them that are justify'd."

Answer, Faith and such Works as the Apostle Paul intends can never concur in the Business of Justification, because the Latter suppose us to have no need of a Mediator, or of the merit of his Obedience and Sacrifice to procure that Act of Grace or Law of Faith, by which we are justify'd. Much less can they have any Coefferency therein. Faith it self has no Efficiency in it, no more than a Rebell's accepting a freely offer'd Pardon, by laying down his Arms and submitting to his Prince's Government, is the efficient Cause of the Prince's Act of Grace, or of the good Services of those that have solicited him to pass it. Both being previous to any Application on the Rebell's Part. And Works in the Sense of the Apostle Paul, suppose us to stand in no need of Pardon it self. And whereas he adds, The other Apostle assures us, that Faith and Works have a Coexistence in them that are justified, this is utterly untrue, concerning Works in the Apostle Paul's Sense, for Faith supposes us to have no such Works at all. But for Works in the Apostle James's Sense, viz. such Works of sincere tho' imperfect Obedience as a living Faith produces, they have not only a Coexistence in them that are justify'd, but are as absolutely necessary to our Continuance in a State of Favour and Acceptance with God, as Faith is to our first Entrance into it. As I shall shew in what follows.

Having thus shown, that this Writer's Method of reconciling the seemingly different Assertions of these two inspired Apostles is grounded on a false Supposition, that both speak of Works in the same Sense, I now proceed to lay down what I take to be the true and easy way of reconciling them, and that founded on this Consideration that Justification on God's Part is a continued Act,

To clear this I must premise, that I think it manifest that both the Apostles speak of the same Justification and of the same Faith, when the one asserts, our being justified by Faith without the Works of the Law, and other asserts, that we are justified by Works, and not by the Faith only. For when the Apostle James asserts that Father Abraham to have been justify'd by Works, when he offer'd up his Son, he supposes that Scripture fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for Righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God. Now that Text manifestly speaks of Justification in the Sight of God, and not of Justification in the Sight or Opinion of Men; even of that Justification by which he became an Object of God's gracious Acceptance, which God himself testify'd by giving him that honourable Appellation of his Friend. And the Apostle Paul as evidently speaks of Justification before God, when he cites this very Passage to prove his Doctrine of Justification by Faith in opposition to Justification by the Law of Works. And that the Apostle James when he asserts Abraham to have been justify'd by Works when he offer'd his Son, speaks of Justification in the Sight of God, is hence evident, that God himself on that Occasion testifies his continued Acceptance of him, and renews the same Pro-

trials to him of his eminently blessing him, and of all Nations of the Earth being blessed in his Seed, and assigns this as the Reason of it, viz. *Because he had obey'd his Voice.* See Gen. 12. 16, 17, 18. compared with Gen. xv. 5. xvii. 4, 5. Whence we may I think justly conclude. That both Apostles speak of the same Justification in the sight of God.

And 'tis no less manifest, That both speak of the same Faith. For both speak of the Faith that was imputed to Abraham for Righteousness, And of that very Faith of Abraham the Apostle James speaks, when he saith, *It wrought with his Works, and was perfected by them.* James ii. 22. i. e. Every way available to his continued Acceptance with God. Since then they intend the same Justification and the same Faith, It appears impossible to me to reconcile their seemingly opposite Assertions, if we suppose them to speak of Works in the same Sense.

What the Apostle Paul intends by the Works of the Law (whether Ceremonial peculiar to the Jews, or Moral Obligatory on both Jew and Gentile) He has so fully explain'd himself that it is strange how so many learned Men could mistake his meaning. 'Tis such Works he denies our being justified by, as fully answer the Demands of the divine Law; such as if we had them, would render the Reward to be of Debt and not of Grace; such as would give us ground of Boasting or Glorifying in our selves, Such as if we had them, would render our Redemption from the Curse of the Law by Christ's becoming a Curse for us, needless, and would argue that he died in vain to obtain it for us. And his Doctrine wherein he denies our being justified by the Works of the Law in this Sense, is directly levelled against the proud Pretensions of the Jews (his chief Opponents in this Debate) and equally strikes against any Pretension to such Works by those Gentiles who had only the Law written in their Hearts. And the Maxims he lays down and argues from would be manifestly untrue, and his Arguments utterly inconclusive if we understand him not of Works in this Sense, but of all sincerely good Actions whatsoever. 'Tis evidently false that to him that performs any sincerely good Actions, the Reward is reckon'd of Debt, and not of Grace. 'Tis equally false, That he that performs them has ground of Boasting or Glorifying in himself, when those good Actions need Mercy to pardon their Defects, and the Merits of Christ to recommend them to the divine Acceptance and are performed by the Assistance of the Holy Spirit. 'Tis false, That such sincerely good Actions imply Christ to have died in vain. But all these Maxims are true, And the Apostle's Reasoning from them just and conclusive, if we understand him of Works in the Sense I have mention'd.

Now no Man can pretend, That the Apostle James intends Works in this Sense, when he asserts our being justified by Works and not by Faith only. Far be it from us to ascribe such an arrogant Opinion to that blessed Apostle. An Opinion so absurd that it destroys it self. For to be justify'd by such Works would render the Mediation of Christ and the Merit of his Obedience and Sacrifice needless and useless, and sap the very Foundation that our Faith is built upon.

The Apostle James therefore by Works intends only such Acts of sincere Obedience, as are the genuine Fruits of a living Faith. And as he supposes us first admitted into a State of Favour and Acceptance with God by Faith (i. e. upon our Assent to the Truth, Consent to the Duties, and Affiance in the Promises of the Gospel-Covenant) so he supposes us to be continued in it by such Acts of sincere Obedience as such a Faith, (if it be a vital Principle) will be productive of. And the Reason of his Asserting our being continued in a justified State by such Works as these is plain and obvious, That they are absolutely necessary to our continuing the Objects of the Favour and Acceptance of God in a consistency with the Honour of

his Government and the essential Perfections of his Nature. Without them we cannot be the continued Objects of his Complacency, or Heirs of his Promises. *The Righteous Lord loveth Righteousness, and his Countenance beholds the Upright.* Ps. xi. 7. *But he is not a God that hath Pleasure in Wickedness, Neither shall Evil dwell with him; The Foolish shall not stand in his Sight, and he hates all the Workers of Iniquity.* Psalm v. 4, 5. That Faith by which we enter into a justified State would not be available to our continuance in it, if such genuine Fruits of Holiness did not flow from it. And therefore the Apostle James in saying, *That a Man is justified by Works, and not by Faith only,* intends the very same thing that the Apostle Paul does when he saith, *That in Christ Jesus, neither Circumcision avails any thing, nor Uncircumcision,* (i. e. to render us Objects of divine Acceptance) *but Faith that worketh by Love.* Gal. v. 6. Even that Love that appears in our upright Endeavours to keep the Commandments of God. As appears from that parallel place 1 Cor. vii. 19.

And 'tis a great Mistake to think, That our being justified i. e. continued in a State of Acceptance of God) by such Acts of Sincere Obedience, does any way derogate from or intrench upon the peculiar Honour of Christ's Mediation, and from the Merit of his sinless Obedience and Attoning Sacrifice. For that Act of Grace whereby our Sins are pardon'd, And we are made Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life, is founded thereon as the only procuring Cause of it. 'Tis for Christ's Sake that our Sins are pardon'd; that our Faith and sincere Obedience, tho' imperfect and defective as to their Degree, are graciously accepted; and that our final Perseverance therein shall be crown'd with Eternal Glory as a Reward of Grace and not of Debt. And what farther cuts off all Pretensions of Glorifying in ourselves, 'Tis from that Fullness of Grace that dwells in him that we are enabled to believe and obey. All the concern that Faith has in our Entrance into a justified State, or Acts of sincere Obedience have in our Continuance in it, is but to qualify us to partake of so inestimable a Privilege in a way consistent with the essential Holiness of God, and with the Rights and Honour of his Moral Government. And the want of duly considering this has led many into unhappy Mistakes and great Confusion, to the obscuring this plain and important Article of the Christian Religion. For farther Satisfaction I must refer the Reader to the 5th Dissertation above.

I hope the Reader from what I have now offer'd may clearly see how entirely the Doctrine of the Apostle Paul agrees with that of the Apostle James. The Former, in opposition to the Jews, asserts our Justification by Faith, and by the Law of Faith, in opposition to our being justified by the Law of Works, which would exclude both the Grace of God and the Merits of Christ, and lead us to glory in our Works as meritorious of the Reward of eternal Life. The Latter in opposition to such hypocritical Pretenders to Christianity, who thought a bare speculative Belief of the Gospel would be available to their Justification and Salvation without the Fruits of sincere Obedience, asserts such Fruits of sincere Obedience to be as necessary to our continuance in a justified State, as Faith to our first Entrance upon it. And this is a Doctrine which the Apostle Paul was so far from impugning, that 'tis manifestly agreeable to the general Strain and Scope of his inspired Writings, and indeed to the whole Scope of all the other inspired Writers, who unanimously assert the necessity of sincere Obedience to our being the continued Objects of divine Favour and Acceptance, and Heirs of his promised Salvation.

Having thus us'd my best Endeavours to set this scriptural Doctrine of Evangelical Justification in it's true Light, I have but a few Words to add to such

such Readers into whose Hands these Dissertations may fall. I can sincerely profess, that I have been impartial in my Search after Truth, having rather had recourse to the sacred Scriptures as the unerring Fountain of divine Knowledge than to the Systems of fallible Men. I have studiously avoided the naming those Authors whose Mistakes I have animadverted on, except in two or three Instances, where it could hardly be avoided. Personal Reflections should be avoided by all sincere Enquirers after divine Truth. I impute to none the Consequences of any erroneous Sentiments which themselves disavow, how justly soever they are deducible from their Mistakes. If I have my self run into any material mistakes, I shall be thankful to any candid Writer that shall assist me to rectify them. For the clear Evidence of divine Truth shall be welcome to me by whatever Hand it

is presented. And I am so far from declining Christian or Ministerial Communion with such whose Sentiments in reference to this Article may be in some particular ways of explaining it different from mine, that I abhor the Thoughts of it; I have too great a Sense of the Imperfection of our Understandings who *know but in part*, to think that all Christian Teachers should be of an equal Size in divine Knowledge, or that the different Degrees of it should be any Obstruction to their mutual Love and Communion, where they are agreed in all the Essential Principles of the Christian Religion, and impose no unwarrantable Terms of Communion. I shall close these Dissertations with the Conclusion that a pious Writer does a Treatise of his on this Subject.

Deo Gloria, Mihi Condonatio!



A B R I E F

P A R A P H R A S E

On those P A S S A G E S

I N T H E

New T E S T A M E N T,

That chiefly relate to the

D O C T R I N E of J U S T I F I C A T I O N.



Chose to begin with those remarkable Words of our Blessed Saviour himself which occur in his instructive Parable of the *Pharisee* and the *Publican*, which give considerable Light to the true Notion of *Evangelical Justification* so largely treated on in the Epistles of the Apostle *Paul*. Luke xviii. 9, 10, 11. &c.

The *Pharisee* is represented as *One that trusted in himself that he was righteous, and despised others*. And therefore addresses himself to God rather with a proud Ostentation of those external Works which he reckoned were meritorious of the divine Favour and Reward, than with any penitent Confession of Guilt, and humble Suit to divine Mercy for the Pardon of it. *God I thank thee, That I am not as other Men are, Extortioners, Unjust, Adulterers, or even as this Publican. I Fast twice a Week, I give Tythes of all that I possess*. See v. 11, 12.

The *Publican* (on whom this proud *Pharisee* look'd with so much Contempt) is represented, as *standing afar off, ashamed to lift up his Eyes to Heaven, but smiting on his Breast, and saying, God Be merciful to me a Sinner*.

Our Saviour's Remark upon their different inward Temper that appear'd in the different Strain of their Addresses to God, is very observable; I tell you, *This Man* (i. e. the *Publican*) *went down to his House justified rather than the other. For every one that exalts himself shall be abased; But he that humbles himself shall be exalted*.

Here I think, 'Tis evident, That our Saviour's Meaning is, That the *Publican* upon his ingenuous Shame and Remorse for his past Sins, deep Humiliation and that Godly Sorrow for them that worketh Repentance unto Salvation never to be repented of, and earnest Application to divine Mercy for the Forgiveness of them, return'd to his House, absolv'd from the Guilt of them, received into the Favour of a reconciled God, and graciously accepted by him, rather than the arrogant *Pharisee* that so vainly boasted of his own external Works, and so trusted in them as to be insensible of his absolute need of forgiving Mercy. The self-abas'd and relenting *Publican* found that pardoning Mercy and favourable Acceptance

with God, which he so humbly implor'd; while the vain-glorious Address of the self-exalting *Pharisee* was rejected with just Disdain.

That the Apostle *Paul* had the same Notion of *Justification*, that these Words of our Saviour here evidently point out to us, will appear in the whole Strain of his Epistles wherein he treats on this Article.

Before I enter upon what occurs in his Epistles, I think it not improper to take notice of one Passage in his Discourse at *Antioch* in *Pisidia* recorded by St. *Luke* Acts xiii. 38, 39. *Be it known unto you therefore Men and Brethren, That thro' this Man is preached unto you the Remission of Sins; And by him all that believe, are justify'd from all Things, from which ye cou'd not be justified by the Law of Moses*. Where by being justified he evidently intends being discharged from the Curse which that Law denounc'd against the Transgressors of it, and even from the Guilt of those Sins which that Law provided no Sacrifices to make Attonement for.

I shall now proceed to consider what this Apostle declares when he more professedly and largely treats on this excellent Subject in his Epistle to the *Romans*.

He enters on it in the 1st. Chap. at v. 16.

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ. For it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth, to the Jew first, and also unto the Gentile. q. d. I am not ashamed of that Gospel of Christ which is God's effectual Instrument for promoting the Salvation of all that embrace it by an unfeigned Faith, whether Jews or Gentiles without any Distinction. For tho' the offers of that Salvation were first to be made to the Jews, yet they are now made to the Gentiles upon the same gracious Terms.

For therein (i. e. in the Gospel) *is the Righteousness of God revealed from Faith to Faith, As it is written, The Just shall live by Faith.*

Whether by the *Righteousness of God* we understand (as the generality of judicious Expositors do) God's appointed Way and Method of justifying guilty Sinners, (by freeing them from deserved Condemnation, and giving them a Right to the gracious Reward of eternal

Life;) Or that *Right to Impunity and Life* it self, which the Gospel, that *Law of Faith*, reveals and conveys to all believing Penitents; Or the *Faithfulness* of God in the Performance of his own Promise concerning that *Blessedness that should come on all Nations thro' the Seed of Abraham*, Each of these Senses amounts to the same Thing.

This *Righteousness of God* is revealed (in the Gospel) from *Faith to Faith*, i. e. either wholly by *Faith*, (as oppos'd to all *Works of the Law* that would make the *Reward to be of Debt*, and not of *Grace*;) Or from that *Faith* that was suited to the obscurer Revelation the Church had before the actual Coming of Christ, to that more explicit *Faith* which the Gospel now requires, as suited to that far clearer Discovery it makes of the Counsels of divine Wisdom and Grace for our Recovery and Salvation by Jesus Christ. As it is written, *The Just shall live by Faith*, i. e. obtain Life by believing and embracing the gracious Promises of it founded on the Mediation of Christ, and by complying with the Terms on which it is offer'd in the *Law of Faith*, or *Gospel-Covenant*. (Concerning which *Law of Faith* the Reader may consult the Account given of it in the Vth, Dissertation.)

To make good this great Truth, The Apostle at large shews the utter Impossibility of our being justify'd in any other Way and Method than that which the Gospel reveals.

To that End he tells us, That the *Wrath of God* is reveal'd from Heaven against all *Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness*.

And accordingly he proves at large, First, That the *Gentiles* were obnoxious to that *Vindictive Wrath* of God, by manifold Sins against the *Light of Nature*, or the *Law written in their Hearts*; And then that the *Jews* were so far from an exact Observance of the written *Law*, that they were no less chargeable with manifold Violations of it that rendred them as truly obnoxious to the *Curse* it denounc'd against all that continued not in all Things written in the Book of the *Law* to do them. Thus he tells us, *He had proved both Jews and Gentiles to be all under Sin*, and all the *World* to have become guilty before God (i. e. liable to his vindictive Justice $\pi\acute{\nu}\delta\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma\ \tau\acute{\omega}\ \theta\epsilon\acute{\omega}$.) He justly concludes therefore That by the *Deeds of the Law* (i. e. such as the *Law of Works* absolutely demands in order to entitle us to the Favour of God and eternal Life) *No Flesh could be justify'd in his Sight*; For by the *Law of the Knowledge of Sin*, q. d. That *Law* that convicts us of, and condemns us for sinning against it, could never acquit us, or entitle us to it's promised *Reward* as perfect Observers of it. But now (saith he) *The Righteousness of God without the Law*, is manifested, being witnessed by the *Law* and the *Prophets*, Even the *Righteousness of God* which is by the *Faith of Jesus Christ* unto all, and upon all them that believe, For there is no difference. i. e. God's Method of justifying such guilty Sinners as all Mankind are, without the *Law*, (i. e. without the *Law of Works*, by another and distinct Rule of Judgment, the *Law of Faith*) is manifested, being witness'd by the *Law* and the *Prophets*. It was witness'd by the *Law*, both by it's convicting them of manifold Violations that rendred them obnoxious to it's *Curse*, and shew'd the impossibility of their being justified by the Tenour of it; and by those typical Sacrifices, which since they could not take away the real Guilt of Sin, (as appear'd from the frequent Repetition of them) so they were only Prefigurations of that promised *Messiah*, that *Lamb of God*, that now once in the End of the *World* has appear'd to take away Sin (i. e. the condemning Guilt of it) by the *Sacrifice of himself*. It was witness'd by the *Prophets*, In those frequent Declarations they made of God's pardoning Mercy to all that return'd to him by sincere Penitance, and Faith in the promised *Messiah*. Their inspired Writ-

ings abound with so numerous Declarations of this Strain as render it needless to cite any particular Passages. And these Declarations were not the Language of the *Mosaic Law* as deliver'd at Mount Sinai, which denounc'd a *Curse* against the Transgressors of it, but the Language of that *Covenant of Grace* that was confirm'd of God in Christ long before the delivery of that *Law*. See Gal. iii. 17. v. And this Method of our Justification by Faith in our Lord Jesus extends to all that believe in him, whether Jews or Gentiles. Both of them being upon their believing freed from Condemnation, and made Heirs according to the Hope of eternal Life. This the Apostle illustrates farther in the following Words, *For all have sinned and fallen short of the Glory of God, Being justified freely by his Grace, thro' the Redemption that is in Christ Jesus, Whom God hath set forth (or, fore-ordin'd) to be a Propitiation (or, Propitiatory $\iota\lambda\alpha\sigma\iota\sigma\mu\acute{o}\varsigma$) thro' Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteousness in the Remission of Sins that are past thro' the forbearance of God; He declare, I say, at this time his Righteousness that he might be just and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus* i. e. All by their manifold Violations of the *Law of Works* have fall'n short of that Glory and Felicity which was the *Reward* promised to the sinless Observers of it, and are liable to the *Curse* denounc'd against the Transgressors of it, and can no other way be discharged from their Guilt (or, Obligation to Punishment) and reinstated in the Favour of God, and entitled to their forfeited Happiness, but by an Act of undeserved Grace and Mercy founded on the valuable Consideration of the sinless Obedience and attoning Sacrifice of Christ Jesus as the meritorious or procuring Cause of it. Even that Christ Jesus, whom God hath fore-ordin'd to expiate our Sins by shedding his precious Blood to procure the Remission of them, and has thro' him given all penitent Believers free Access to his Mercy-seat to sue for the forgiveness of them. And he has chosen this Way and Method of dispensing his pardoning Mercy thro' the interposal of Christ's attoning Sacrifice, to declare and manifest his vindictive Righteousness in the Punishment of Sin, and to render the Honour thereof fully consistent with the Exercise of his pardoning Mercy, (both with respect to the Sins of those who lived before the coming of Christ, and ours to whom this vindictive Righteousness is more clearly and fully declared;) so that God appears now to be just, (an Hater of Sin, and Punisher of it) and yet the gracious Justifier of all that believe in his Son, and comply with the Terms of Forgiveness appointed in that Act of Grace that is founded on his Mediation. Christ has by dying in our stead, by suffering the Just for the Unjust, and giving his own Life a Ransom for ours, fully accorded the Interests of divine Justice and Mercy in our free Forgiveness and Acceptance with him upon the Terms of the Gospel.

The Apostle goes on, *Where is Boasting then? It is excluded. By what Law? Of Works? Nay, but by the Law of Faith.* q. d. since the whole *World* is become guilty before God, (or, obnoxious to his vindictive Justice) since all have sinned (both the Gentiles by counter-acting the Light of Nature, and the Jews by transgressing the written *Law*) and fall'n short of the Glory of God, What Ground can any have of Boasting? What Pretension to any Merit of theirs that should render the *Reward of Debt*? This Boasting is now for ever excluded. Not by the *Law of Works*, For had any perfectly obeyed it, the *Reward* would have been reckon'd of *Debt*; and they might have claim'd it as due in the Course of distributive strict Justice. But 'tis excluded by the *Law of Faith*. i. e. by that remedying *Law of Grace*, that New and everlasting Covenant of which Christ is the only Mediator; That *Law* that has made that Faith in his Mediation, and in the gracious Promises founded upon it, that induces us to return to our offended Fe-

ther by an unfeigned Repentance, the Conditional, or appointed Means) of our Pardon and Acceptance with him, and consequently obliges us to renounce all Pretension to merit, and to ascribe our being now pardon'd and entituled to eternal Life, to the free and marvellous Grace of God as the only Spring and Source of it, and to the Obedience and Satisfaction of Christ as the only procuring Cause of it. This is now the Law of Christ's Mediatorial Kingdom, and will be the gracious Rule of Judgment to all that so believe the Gospel as to comply with the great Design of it.

Therefore (saith the Apostle) we conclude that a Man is justify'd by Faith without the Deeds of the Law. To be justify'd by Faith is the same thing as to be justified by the Law of Faith, or, upon the Terms of the Gospel, of which a living and active Faith is the comprehensive Summary. And we are thus justified by Faith, in Opposition to such Deeds as the Law of Works requires, in order to our Acceptance with God, and our being entituled to eternal Life. For as we can pretend to no such Works, we must forever despair of being justified upon the Terms of the Law of Works.

And because the unbelieving Jews reckon'd themselves the only People of God, and boasted of that Righteousness which they pretended to by their external Observance of the Law, and (as our Saviour expresses it,) trusted in themselves that they were Righteous, and despised others, particularly the Uncircumcised Gentiles, the Apostle puts the following Question, Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also. For it is the same God which shall justify the Circumcision by Faith, and the Uncircumcision thro' Faith. q, d. Since we that are the Apostles of Christ are commissioned by him to preach Repentance and remission of Sins in his Name to all Nations, since in the promised Seed of Abraham all Families of the Earth are to be blessed, since we are sent to the Gentiles, to open their Eyes and to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins, and an Inheritance among them that are sanctify'd by Faith that is in Jesus Christ; 'Tis manifest that neither Circumcision nor Uncircumcision avails any thing as to our Acceptance with God, who is willing to admit the believing Gentiles in the same Covenant with the believing Jews, and make both equally Partakers of his Promises by Christ, upon the same Condition of their sincere Faith in him. The same gracious Law of Faith being the Rule of Judgment, with respect to all to whom the Gospel is preach'd.

He adds, to obviate an Objection which might be made against his foregoing Discourse, Do we then make void the Law thro' Faith? God forbid, yea, we establish the Law. The Apostle speaks here of the Moral Law, whose Precepts are of perpetual and indispensable Obligation. Now the Law of Faith by the Tenour whereof we are justify'd, is so far from making void the moral Law, by concealing our Obligation to it as a Rule of Duty, that it rather establishes it, by requiring that Faith as the Condition of our initial Right to Impunity and Life, which is the active Principle of sincere Obedience to it; and which Obedience tho' short of the Perfection which the Law requires, shall yet thro' the Merits of Christ be accepted and crown'd with a gracious Reward.

The Apostle in the IVth Chapter, proceeds to prove his Doctrine of Justification by Faith in opposition to Justification by the Works of the Law, from what is recorded concerning Abraham, whose Justification or Acceptance with God is the Pattern of Justification to all who are his spiritual Seed by being Imitators of his Faith. An Argument very proper to urge with the Jews, who were so prone to value themselves on the Account of their being the carnal Seed of Abraham, and who cou'd not therefore pretend to be justi-

fied in any other way than Abraham their Father was.

What shall we say then that Abraham our Father, as pertaining to the Flesh hath found v. 1? q, d. What Advantage had Abraham by that external Circumcision that was the Seal of the Covenant God made with him and his Seed, above what he had before that external Rite was appointed?

For if Abraham were justify'd by Works, he hath whereof to glory, but not before God. q, d. If Abraham were justify'd by any such Works as cou'd fully answer the Demands of the Law of God, he wou'd have had some Ground of glorying in them, as one who having perfectly obey'd that Law, stood in no need of Pardon, but might claim the Reward of eternal Life by the Tenour of that Law. But even Abraham himself had no such ground of glorying before God, before that God, who if he enter into strict Judgment with us, no Flesh cou'd be justify'd in his Sight, Ps. cxliii. 3.

But what saith the Scripture, Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for Righteousness. Now to him that worketh, the Reward is not reckon'd of Grace but of Debt, but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justify's the Ungodly, his Faith is counted for Righteousness, v. 3, 4, 5.

q, d. The Scripture ascribes Abraham's Acceptance with God, not to any such Works as cou'd fully answer the Demands of his Law; but to his Faith in the gracious Promise of God concerning that Seed of his in whom all the Families of the Earth shou'd be blessed. This Faith was counted to him for Righteousness, or, unto Righteousness, i. e. was plac'd to his Account as the Condition on his part, or the appointed Means, of his Right to Impunity and Life according to the Tenour of the Law of Faith, or the Covenant of Grace. Or if we read the Words according to our Translation, His Faith was counted to him for Righteousness, they must be understood not of a Righteousness with respect to the Law of Works, nor to the Gospel itself consider'd as a Rule of Duty (For the Law of God is unchangeable as the Law of Duty) but a Righteousness with respect to the Gospel consider'd in it's gracious Promises as the Rule of God's judicial Dealings with us, being all that he requires of us in our fall'n State, in order to our initial Pardon and Acceptance unto eternal Life, instead of that perfect sinless Obedience which the Law of Works demanded in order to intitle us to the promised Reward of it. It was upon this Faith in the promised Messiah, and the Blessedness he shou'd be the Author of to all that believe in him; that Abraham was graciously accepted of God, and entituled to a share in that Blessedness. Now to him that worketh, i. e. that perfectly obeys the Law of Works, and can plead such a sinless Performance of all it enjoyns, the Reward of Life is not plac'd to his Account as a Matter of meer undeserv'd Favour, but as a Debt he may claim from strict distributive Justice by the Tenour of that Law. But to him that worketh not, i. e. that has no such perfect Works to plead as cou'd render that Reward due to him by the Tenour of that Law, but believeth on him that justifyeth the Ungodly, i. e. so sincerely believes the Promises of Pardon and Acceptance made thro' the promised Seed of Abraham as to comply with the Terms therein prescrib'd by the Law of Faith, this living and active Faith is plac'd to his Account as the Condition or appointed Means of his Interest in the Blessedness that Christ the Seed of Abraham shou'd in due Time procure by the Merit of his perfect Obedience and attoning Sacrifice. And such a one is justify'd under the Notion of one that has been before Ungodly, and is still it judg'd by the Law of Works a guilty Sinner. And therefore cannot be justify'd under the Notion of a sinless Observer of the Law of God, either by himself, or by any other that is in a Law-sense the same Person with himself.

Even

Even as David also describes the Blessedness of the Man to whom the Lord Imputeth Righteousness without Works, saying, *Blessed are they whose Iniquities are forgiven and whose Sins are cover'd; blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin.* v. 6, 7, 8. q. d. David of whose Seed that Messiah was to spring in whom all the Families of the Earth were to be blessed, does thus describe the Blessedness of the Man whom God will accept and deal with as a Righteous Person (free from Condemnation and entitled to Life) according to that gracious Sanction of the Law of Faith (*He that heareth my Word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting Life, and shall not come into Condemnation, but is pass'd from Death to Life, he that believeth and is baptis'd shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned. There is now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.* See also John iii. 36. John vi. 40, 47. &c. And the like Language runs thro' the whole New-Testament) when David saith, *Blessed are they whose Iniquities are forgiven, and whose Sins are cover'd; Blessed is the Man to whom the Lord will not impute Sin.* For David hereby plainly supposes those whom he pronounces blessed to be Sinners, destitute of any such Works as cou'd render the Reward of Debt, and not of Grace; and places their Blessedness in the Forgiveness and covering of their Sins, and the Non-imputation; or not charging their Sins upon them to their deserved Condemnation, but discharging them from the Guilt of them, as one eminent Branch of that Blessedness which the promised Messiah was to procure for them, upon the Terms prescrib'd in the Gospel that Law of Faith.

The Apostle proceeds, *Cometh this Blessedness* (i. e. of our Pardon and Acceptance with God) *upon the Circumcision only, or upon the Uncircumcision also?* i. e. that is upon the Jews only, or on the Gentiles also. For we say that Faith was reckon'd to Abraham for Righteousness (See the Paraphrase above on v. 3d.) How was it then reckon'd? In Circumcision, or in Uncircumcision? Not in Circumcision, but in Uncircumcision. And he receiv'd the sign of Circumcision a Seal of the Righteousness of the Faith he had, yet being uncircumcised, that he might be Father of all them that believe, tho' they be not circumcised, that Righteousness might be imputed to them also. And the Father of Circumcision to them who are not of the Circumcision only, but also walk in the Steps of our Father Abraham which he had being Uncircumcised. For the Promise that he shou'd be the Heir of the World, was not to Abraham, or his Seed, thro' the Law, but thro' the Righteousness of Faith. v. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, q. d. Abraham had the Promise of that Seed, in whom all the Families of the Earth were to be blessed, before the external Rite of Circumcision was injoin'd; and Circumcision was but a Seal of that Right to Impunity and Life, which he had by Faith before he was circumcised, and which Right was to acree to all that believe and walk in the Steps of his Faith, without any regard to their being circumcised, or Uncircumcised. For that Promise of his being the Heir of the World, was made long before the Law of Moses was deliver'd, and therefore not to him or his spiritual Seed perfect Observers of that Law; but as practical Believers of that Promise concerning Christ as his Seed, by whom this Blessedness of Pardon and Acceptance with God shou'd be made good to all the Imitators of his Faith, whether Jews or Gentiles.

For if they which are of the Law be Heirs, Faith is made void, and the Promise made of none Effect. Because the Law worketh Wrath, for where no Law is there is no Transgression.

q. d. Since the Law worketh Wrath, by denouncing a Curse against all that continue not in all Things written in the Law to do them, to which Curse the Jews as well as Gentiles are obnoxious. If those only are Heirs of his Blessedness, who are perfect Observers of that Law; then Faith in this promised Seed of Abraham is made

void; and the Promise of Blessedness thro' him is made of none Effect, even the Promise of that Blessedness in the Forgiveness of Sins, which the Law by its peremptory Curse debars all from, that have not fully observ'd it, which neither Jews nor Gentiles have done.

Therefore it is of Faith, that it might be by Grace. To the End the Promise might be sure to all the Seed, not to that only which is of the Law, but to that also which is of the Faith of Abraham, who is the Father of us all. (As it is written, *I have made thee a Father of many Nations*) before him whom he believed, Even God who quickeneth the Dead, and calleth those things that are not as tho' they were. q. d. The Blessedness promised thro' the Seed of Abraham, is therefore by Faith, i. e. made to all that believe in him, that the Grace of God may be magnify'd, in sending his own Son Jesus Christ, both to reveal it to them, and to purchase it for them, and in freeing all such sincere Believers for his sake, from the Curse and Condemnation, that by the Tenour of the Law of Works they were liable to, and in making them Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life, tho' destitute of any such Works as could, according to the Tenour of that Law, enable them to claim it as a Reward of Debt. And Faith in this free and gracious Promise, is therefore God's appointed Means of our becoming interested in this promised Blessedness, that the Promise might be made sure, and equally extend to all those that are the spiritual Seed of Abraham, by an Imitation of his Faith, not only to those pious Jews that liv'd under the Dispensation of the Law of Moses, but to the Gentiles also, who, upon their walking in the Steps of Abraham's Faith, are, in God's Account, his spiritual Children, and Heirs of the Promise made to him. As God himself intimates when he saith to Abraham, *I have made thee a Father of many Nations.* Which implies, that all in those many Nations that were Imitators of his Faith, should be accounted his Children, and Heirs of the Promise made to him. For Abraham believed in that God who was able to quicken his own dead Body, and who could call those to be his People who were not so before. Or, who could restore those Gentiles to spiritual Life, that were before dead in Trespasses and Sins, and call those to come into a foederal Alliance with him, who were before Strangers to the Covenants of Promise. (Compare 1 Cor. i. 28. with Eph. xi. 1, 2, &c. and 12th verse.)

Who against Hope believed in Hope, that he might become the Father of many Nations, according to that which is spoken, *so shall thy seed be.* And being not weak in Faith, he consider'd not his own Body, being dead, when he was about an hundred Years old; neither yet the deadness of Sarah's Womb: He staggered not at the Promise of God thro' Unbelief, but was strong in Faith, giving Glory to God; and being fully perswaded, that what he had promised, he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for Righteousness. 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 verse.

These Words contain such a clear Description of Abraham's Faith, both as to the strength of the Habit, and the Eminency of its Actings and Exercise, that they need no Paraphrase to make the sense of them more plain and obvious. And 'tis this Faith that was imputed to him, or plac'd by God to his Account, as the Condition of his Pardon and Acceptance with him, and his becoming an Heir of that Blessedness that Christ, his promised Seed, should purchase for all that believe in him.

Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him, but for us also to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised our Lord Jesus from the dead, who was delivered for our Offences, and raised again for our Justification. ver. 23, 24, 25. q. d. What is thus recorded concerning Abraham's Faith imputed to him for Righteousness, was designed for our Instruction and Encouragement, That if we believe on that God who hath raised from the dead, our Lord Jesus

Jesus Christ, who was, by him, delivered for our Offences, in order to expiate their Guilt, by the shedding of his own precious Blood, and to purchase a Right to Impunity and Eternal Life, for all that come to God by him, and who was raised for our Justification. (His Resurrection assuring us that he made an ample Attonement to Divine Justice for our Offences, That his Expiatory Sacrifice was accepted by God, and that the Promise he has made of Pardon and Acceptance in the Gospel Covenant, to all that sincerely consent to the gracious Terms of it shall be made good.) This Faith shall also be imputed to us unto Righteousness, i. e. shall, as God's appointed Means, secure to us an Interest in this Blessed Privilege of Right to Impunity and Life.

In the Vth Chapter the Apostle thus proceeds.

Therefore being justify'd by Faith, We have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. By whom also we have access by Faith, into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoyce in the Hope of the Glory of God, verse 12. q. d. Being acquitted from our past Guilt upon our believing: There is now a League of Amity and Friendship re-established between God and us, thro' the Mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ; and we become interested in all those inestimable Privileges which God's unmerited Favour bestows upon his reconciled Children, and rejoyce in the Hope of that Glory which is laid up for them, as their designed Eternal Inheritance.

But God commendeth his Love to us, in that while we were yet Sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then being now justify'd by his Blood, We shall be saved from Wrath thro' him. For if when we were Enemies, we were reconciled to God by the Death of his Son, much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his Life. And not only so, but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the Attonement. verse 8, 9, 10, 11. q. d. If we were absolv'd from Guilt and Condemnation, and brought into a state of Reconciliation and Amity with God by the Blood and Death of his Son, our Salvation will be much more secur'd by his Life (both as it includes our final Deliverance from the Wrath to come, and our being put into the compleat Possession of Eternal Life.) He is able to save to the uttermost, all that come to God by him, because he ever lives to make Intercession for us. And this gives us further Ground of Glorifying in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we already partake of the attoning virtue of his Blood in our Reconciliation and Acceptance with God, as an Earnest and Pledge of that consummate Salvation he will be the Author of to all that obey him. Heb. v. 9. see also Rom. viii. 32, 33, 34.

Wherefore as by one Man sin entered into the World, and Death by sin, and so Death passed upon all Men, for that all have sinned. For until the Law sin was in the World, But sin is not imputed, when there is no Law. Nevertheless, Death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the Similitude of Adam's Transgression, who is the Figure of him that is to come. But not as the Offence, so also is the free Gift, &c. 12, 13, 14, 15----

The Apostle here designs to draw a Parallel between the Penal Evils that we derive from the first, and the salutary Benefits we derive from the second Adam, our Lord Jesus Christ, the Former, the Head and Root of fall'n Mankind; the Latter, the Head of all true Believers, as the Members of his Mystical Body.

As to the first Adam he tells us, That by him sin entered into the World, and Death by sin. And as all Mankind derive a sinful and defiled Nature from him, so sin was in the World before the delivery of the Law of Moses. But sin (he tells us) is not imputed when there is no Law.

I cannot, as to these Words, refuse my Assent to the Observation of Mr. Locke, That our Translation of them is not agreeable to the Apostle's real Intention. For the Original is not λογίζεται but ἐλλογείται. Which (as he observes) should be rather rendred, is not rated or tax'd with this Penalty of Death, where there is no Law, that awards that particular Penalty of temporal Death. As there was no such Law upon Record, expressly declaring that to be Penalty of sin, before the Law deliver'd by Moses. And this shews that this particular Penalty was incurred by us thro' Adam's Transgression, of the particular Law given to him in Paradise, which had this Penalty annexed as the Sanction of it. Adam's particular Sin was his eating the forbidden Fruit, in contempt of that express threatening of Death, as the penal Consequence of it. This Precept of abstaining from the forbidden Fruit, was given to Adam as the Head of Mankind, who by transgressing it, forfeited that Right to Immortality, which would have been the Reward of his Obedience, and subjected himself and all his Posterity, to the Sentence of Death. For he who became Mortal himself, could propagate no other than a mortal nature to his Posterity. But tho' this Precept was only given to him, and we cannot be charged with the personal violation of it, yet the Penalty being by the Constitution of the first Covenant or Law to extend to all his Race: That Sin of Adam which in itself could be his only, did in the Effects threatened upon its Commission, become so far ours also. So that from Adam to Moses Death reigned over all Mankind, even over them that had not (personally) sinned after the similitude of Adam's Transgression, viz. by eating the forbidden Fruit. His Offence alone, (which could not be reckon'd their personal Offence, to whom that particular Precept was never given) being yet sufficient to expose his Posterity to the Sentence of Death, as the natural (and by the righteous Constitution of that first Covenant or Law) the penal Consequence of it.

But not as the Offence, so also is the free Gift. For if through the Offence of one many be dead? Much more the Grace of God, and the Gift by Grace, which is by one Man Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. q. d. If one Man's Offence could entail Death upon many, much more will the rich Grace and Favour of God, and that Gift of Eternal Life, which his Grace bestows, thro' the Merits of one Man, even Christ Jesus, his beloved Son, abound towards many.

And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the Gift. For the Judgment was by one to Condemnation, but the free Gift is of many Offences unto Justification. q. d. It was by the one Offence of one Man, that all were liable to the Sentence of Death. But that free Gift of God that restores us to the Hope of Eternal Life, cancels the Guilt of manifold personal Offences, whereby we had much more forfeited all Title to it.

For if by one Man's Offence, Death reigned by one, Much more they that receive abundance of Grace, and of the Gift of Righteousness, shall reign in Life by one Jesus Christ. q. d. If one Man's Offence gave Death such an Universal Empire, much more shall they that receive such abundant Effects of the special Favour of God, and that Blessed Gift of Right to Impunity and Eternal Life, reign in the actual Possession of that Life by Jesus Christ, who has by his Obedience and Sacrifice, procured that free Gift for them.

Therefore as by the Offence of one, Judgment [came] upon all Men to Condemnation, even so by the Righteousness of one, [the free Gift came] unto all Men to Justification of Life.

Here indeed, I must premise, That our Translators seem not to have given us an exact Version of the Original, which runs thus, [Ἀπὸ ἑνὸς ὡς δι' ἑνὸς παρὰ τὸν μᾶλλον εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους εἰς κατάντημα, ὅπως δι' ἑνὸς δικαιοσύνη εἰς δικαιοσύνη ζωῆς.] Whereas the literal Translation should be rather, As by one Offence [Judg-

ment came] upon all Men to condemnation, so by one righteous Act, the free Gift, [came] upon all unto Justification of Life. v. 19. And accordingly the Marginal Reading is, by one Offence, and by One Righteousness. For so they render [*ἐκ μιᾶς ἀνομίας*] which, I think, by its Opposition to One Offence, may be more properly rendred One Righteous Act, i. e. One Instance of his Conformity to the Law of his Mediation, which oblig'd him to give his Life a Ransom for ours. q. d. As Adam, by one Offence, subjected all Men to the sentence of Death, so Christ, by one righteous Act (of giving his Life a Ransom for ours) has obtain'd for all, the conditional Gift and Grant of Right to Impunity and Life. For as by one Man's Disobedience many were made Sinners, so by the Obedience of One, shall many be made Righteous. q. d. As by Adam's Disobedience many were made guilty Creatures, i. e. obnoxious to Death, as the threatned Penalty of Adam's Transgression; so by the Obedience of Christ (especially that most eminent Instance of it, his humbling himself, and becoming (in our stead) Obedient to Death, and even the Death of the Cross) shall many be restor'd to the Privilege of Righteous Persons, by a free Gift of a new Right to Eternal Life, upon their compliance with the Terms of the Gospel.

Moreover, the Law entred, that the Offence might abound, But where Sin abounded, Grace did much more abound. q. d. The Law of Moses having, in the Ceremonial part of it, superadded many positive Precepts to the Moral Law, which extended to all Mankind, as well as to the Jews, occasion'd the abounding of Sin among them, by manifold Violations of the Ceremonial as well as Moral Law; But where sin hath abounded, the Grace of the Gospel abounds much more in the free and full Remission of it.

That as sin hath reigned unto Death, so might Grace reign through Righteousness unto Eternal Life, by Jesus Christ our Lord, ver. 21. q. d. That as Sin reigned by subjecting all Mankind to Death, as the penal Fruit of Adam's Transgression, so might Grace reign thro' Christ's Obedience to Death, unto Eternal Life, by him that by dying for us abolish'd Death, and purchas'd for us that Life and Immortality which he has brought to Light by his Gospel. Or through that Right to Impunity and Life, which Christ has purchased for us to the actual Possession of a blessed Immortality.

The remaining Passages in this Epistle that seem to have any reference to the Doctrine of Justification, are such as follow.

Chap. vii. 4. v. Wherefore my Brethren, ye also are become dead to the Law by the Body of Christ, that we shou'd be married to another, even to him that is raised from the Dead, that we shou'd bring forth Fruit unto God.

The Apostle here compares the Mosaick Law to an Husband that hath Dominion over the Wife, while he Lives, from which Dominion she is loosed by his Death, and left free to marry another. Now (saith he) ye are become dead to the Law, (by its ceasing to be to you a Rule of final Judgment, and its condemning Power being taken away by that Body of Christ which he once offer'd for the expiation of your Guilt) that ye might be brought into a new conjugal Relation to your risen Saviour, and by your Union to him, and vital Influence deriv'd from him, might bring forth those Fruits of Righteousness that are to the Glory of God by him, and acceptable to him and graciously rewardable by him through the Merits of Christ.

Chap. viii. v. 1. There is therefore now no Condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.

We are in Christ Jesus, not only by such a bare Relation as Disciples have to their Teachers, Subjects to their Rightful Lord, and Clients to their powerful Advocate, but by such a vital Union to him as the Branches have with the Vine, or the Members with the Head, by a participation of his renewing sanctifying

Spirit, by whom we are enabled to walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit (i. e. not according to the irregular Passions and Desires of depraved Nature, but according to the External Directions of the Holy Spirit in the Holy Scriptures, and his inward Dictates and Motions that are always conformable thereto.) And to all such there is no Condemnation, since their Guilt (or Obligation to Punishment) is cancell'd by the attoning Blood of Christ, in whom they have Redemption even the Forgiveness of Sins.

For the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the Law of Sin and Death. q. d. For the governing Influence of that quickning Spirit that is in Christ and is by him communicated to all his living Members, hath made me free from the Dominion of Sin, which wherever it reigns is deadly and destructive.

Or, if by the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus, we understand the Law of Faith, 'tis by that Law as accompanied by the quickning Influences of that Holy Spirit which Christ communicates to all his living Members, that we are freed from the deadly and destructive Diminution of Sin.

For what the Law could not do, in that it was weak thro' the Flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, and for Sin (or as our Margin reads it, by a Sacrifice for Sin) condemned Sin in the Flesh, that the Righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit.

If these Words refer to that Freedom from Condemnation mention'd in the 1st verse, They may be thus paraphrased. For what the Law cou'd not do to free us from Condemnation, because of the weakness of depraved Nature that rendred us incapable of the sinless Observance of it, and by involving us in manifold Guilt rendred us obnoxious to its Curse, that God has done, by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful Flesh, to offer up himself an attoning Sacrifice for us, by which he has adjudged Sin to Punishment in that human Nature that had sin'd, that that [*ἀνομία*] Right to Impunity and Life which the Law of Works cou'd not give, because of our inability to observe it, might (by the gracious Tenour of the Law of Faith) be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit. But if the Words refer to the 2d Verse that asserts our being freed by the Law of the Spirit of Life, from the deadly (or, destructive) Dominion of sin. They may be thus paraphrased, what the Law could not do through our Inability, to yield the perfect Obedience it requir'd, God has done by sending his Son, to be our Sin-offering, and by condemning Sin in that human Nature he assum'd, to procure our Freedom from deserved Condemnation: That that real Righteousness might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit, which God will graciously accept and reward, notwithstanding the culpable Imperfection of it, since that is cancell'd by an Act of pardoning Mercy, founded on the virtue of Christ's attoning Sacrifice. Both Interpretations are agreeable to the Analogy of Faith, tho' the former appears to me preferable to the latter.

Vers 33, 34. Who shall lay any thing to the Charge of God's Elect? It is God that justifieth. Who shall condemn? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, and is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh Intercession for us. q. d. Who shall arraign God's chosen ones? (such as are Elect according to the Fore-knowledge of the Father, through the Sanctification of the Spirit to Obedience, and sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus. 1 Pet. i. 2.) 'Tis God that has by an Act of Grace, absolv'd them from their Guilt. Who shall condemn them? It is Christ that died, to expiate their Guilt, and free them from the Sentence of Condemnation, which the Law had virtually pass'd upon them. Yea rather, who is risen again, and sits down at the right hand of God, and appears in his Presence, to make Intercession for them: For hereby the Efficacy and Virtue of his Death to expiate their Guilt, and obtain their Forgiveness and Acceptance with God.

is fully manifested, he is invested in full Power to deliver them from the Wrath to come, and his Intercession renders him able to save them to the uttermost.

Chap. x. 3.

For they being ignorant of God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the Righteousness of God.

The Apostle is here speaking of the unbelieving Jews, q. d. They being ignorant of God's Method of justifying those that had sinned and fall'n short of his Glory, by an Act of free and unmerited Grace founded on the Redemption that is through Christ Jesus, and going about to establish that Right to the heavenly Reward which they claim'd as in their own vain Conceit Observers of the Law of Works, have not submitted to this Way of Justification which God has appointed, (for exalting the Glory of his own Grace and Honour of his beloved Son's Mediator Undertaking.)

For Christ is the End of the Law for Righteousness to every one that believeth q. d. The Design of the Law of Works that denounc'd such a peremptory Curse against the Transgressors of it, was to convince them of their manifold Guilt, that rendred them obnoxious to that Curse, and as a School-master to lead them to Christ, by whom alone they cou'd obtain Redemption from that Curse, and a new Right to Life upon the gracious Terms of the Law of Faith.

For Moses describes the Righteousness which is of the Law, that the Man which does those Things shall live by them. q. d. Moses thus describes that Right to Life, which the Tenour of the Law wou'd enable a Man to claim as due, if he had exactly observ'd it, The Man that does these Things shall live in them, (or, by them.)

But the Righteousness which is of Faith speaketh on this wise. Say not in thine Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? That is, to bring Christ down from Above; Or who shall descend into the Deep? (That is, to bring up Christ from the Dead) But what saith it, The Word is nigh thee, even in thy Mouth and in thine Heart, that is the Word of Faith which we preach, That if thou shalt confess with thy Mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine Heart, that God hath raised him from the Dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made to Salvation. ver. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10.

'Tis observ'd by judicious Expositors, that the Apostle does not mention Moses, though he here paraphrases upon those Words of his which we find, Deut. xxx. 12. Applying them to the Doctrine of the Gospel, to which they were much more applicable then to the Law as deliver'd by him. I think also a very just Observation of the learned Junius, That there is mention made of a two-fold Covenant of God made with the People of Israel, one at Horeb, the other in the Land of Moab, as you read Deut. xxix. ver. 1. These are the Words of the Covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the Children of Israel in the Land of Moab, beside the Covenant which he made with them in Horeb. The Covenant at Horeb denounc'd a peremptory Curse against all that continued not in all Things written in the Book of the Law to do them. In this Covenant made with them in the

Land of Moab, we find express Promises of Forgiveness upon their Repentance, of the Operations of divine Grace to circumcise their Hearts, and the Hearts of their Seed, to love him with all their Heart and Soul, that they might live. See Deut. xxx. 2, 3, 6, 8, 10. Promises that evidently appertain to the Gospel-Covenant. Heb. viii. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13. And 'tis of this Covenant that Moses may be justly understood to speak in the Words which the Apostle refers to, and makes this Paraphrase on, by shewing them the solid Foundation of those gracious Promises. q. d. I may apply to the Word of Faith which we preach, and the way of our Justification declar'd therein, the Words of Moses concerning that Covenant God made with his People in the Land of Moab, Say not in thine Heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (That is, To bring Christ down from above, to expiate our Guilt, to redeem us from the Curse the Law has threatned, and to purchase Eternal Life for us.) Or who shall descend into the Deep? (That is, to bring up Christ from the Dead, to raise him for our Justification who was deliver'd for our Offences.) This Word or Doctrine of Faith is nigh unto thee, even in thy Mouth, to confess, and in thine Heart to believe and embrace, viz. That if thou confessest with thy Mouth Christ to be thy Lord, and Saviour, and believe with thine Heart that God raised him from the Dead, so as to embrace the Promises and comply with the Terms of that Covenant of which he is the Mediator and Surety, thou shalt obtain that Salvation he came to reveal and purchase. For with the Heart Man believeth in order to his Pardon and Acceptance with God; and with the Mouth he makes such a Profession of his Faith in all the genuine Fruits of it as shall issue in his final Salvation.

Having consider'd what the Apostle has delivered concerning this Doctrine of our Justification by Faith in opposition to Justification by the Works of the Law, in his Epistle to the Romans, I proceed to consider what occurs relating to that Subject in his two Epistles to the Christians of Corinth.

In this first Epistle, Chap. the 1st. The Apostle having told us, that he and other Apostles preached Christ crucified, a Stumbling-block to the Jews, and Folly to the Greeks, but to all that were called the Power of God, and the Wisdom of God. He thus celebrates the great Advantages and Benefits that accrew by him to all that sincerely believ'd in him, Of him, (i. e. of God the Father) are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us, Wisdom, and Sanctification, and Redemption, that according as it is written, he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord, ver. 30, 31.

'Tis manifest at first View, that there is that usual Figure in these Words, which we call a Metonymy, where the Effect is put for the Cause. He is made Wisdom to us, i. e. the Author of it by the external Revelation of the Will of God, and by the internal Illumination of his Holy Spirit; not that his personal Wisdom is communicated to us, and we made as wise as he thereby. He is made Sanctification to us, i. e. the Author of it by the sanctifying Operations of his Holy Spirit, not by infusing his own personal and spotless Holiness into us. He is made Redemption to us, i. e. The Author of the Redemption of our Bodies and of the Consummation of our Happiness which we then expect. In the like Sense, we must understand his being made Righteousness to us. Not that his personal Righteousness (which con-

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listened in his perfect Performance of the Law of his Mediation, as I have shown more fully under the 4th Dissertation) is made in a *Law-sense*, and the Estimation of the Law-giver, *our Righteousness*. For the *Righteousness* here mention'd is a *Benefit or Blessing* that redounds to us from the merit of his perfect Performance of that Law of his Mediation. And what can that be, but that *Right to Impunity and Life*, which he has purchased for all that comply with the Terms prescrib'd in the *Law of Faith, or Covenant of Grace*? And our deriving all these Benefits from him, cuts off all Ground of *glorying in our selves*, and teaches us to *glory in the Lord*, by ascribing the Glory of the whole Work of our Salvation to him to whom alone it is due.

See the Vth Dissertation.

There is another Passage relating to this Subject in the 2d. Epistle to the Corinthians.

And all things are of God, who hath reconcil'd us to himself by Jesus Christ, and given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation; to wit, That God was in Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing their Trespases to them, and hath committed to us the Word of Reconciliation. Now then, we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's Stead, be ye reconcil'd to God. For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God to him.

What this *Word* (or, *Doctrine*) of *Reconciliation* is which was committed to the Apostles, he plainly tells us, *That God is in (or by) Christ reconciling the World to himself, not imputing to them their Trespases*. i. e. He is on his part through the Mediation of his beloved Son most willing to have a mutual Reconciliation between himself and those guilty Sinners that were become *Enemies to him by wicked Works*, brought about; and has for that End pass'd a general Conditional Act of Pardon for their past Trespases on the reasonable and gracious Terms of their returning to him through the Mediator he has provided, and who *gave himself a Ransom for all*. And Christ himself has appointed us as his *Ambassadors*, to carry on this Design of Reconciliation. And therefore we in the Name of God, and in the stead of Christ, beseech and pray you *that ye wou'd be reconcil'd to God*, by laying down your unreasonable Enmity and Disaffection, that is now the only remaining Obstacle of a mutual Amity, and by subjecting your selves to his rightful Authority and Government, and thankfully accepting this offer'd Grace as the purchase of the Blood of Christ. That this Paraphrase is just, is hence evident, that if we were *actually* reconcil'd to God, and our Sins forgiven *immediately* upon the Death of Christ, there were no need or occasion at all for this Ministry of Reconciliation, none for using such earnest Intreaties and Persuasions to Sinners, to be reconcil'd to him; none for importunately beseeching them (as in the 1st verse of the following Chapter) *not to receive the Grace of God* (i. e. this merciful Proposal and Offer of it) *in vain*.

For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him. q. d. He made his innocent Son a *Sin-offering* or *Sacrifice for us*, to make Attonement for our Guilt that we might by God's gracious Act of Indemnity be discharg'd from that Guilt, and restor'd thereby to the Privilege of righteous Persons, upon our renouncing our past Enmity and

wicked Works, and returning to our Duty and Allegiance, and this for the Sake of the compleat Attonement that Christ has made in order to the rendering this Exercise of God's pardoning Mercy consistent with the Honour of his offended Justice.

That this is a just Paraphrase of the Text will appear, if we consider, that the Words in the Hebrew Tongue which answers to *anastia* are very frequently us'd to signify a *Sacrifice for Sin*. The learned Reader may see it so us'd, *Lev. iv. 3, 25, 29. Lev. v. 6, vii. 2, &c. Psalm. xl. 6*. And 'tis us'd in the New-Testament in the same Sense *Rom. viii. 3. Heb. ix. 28. Heb. x. 6. Heb. xiii. 11*. For a *Sin-offering* or *Sacrifice for Sin*. And this Sense is every way agreeable to the Context which treats of our *Reconciliation to God by Jesus Christ*. And our being *made the Righteousness of God* in (or, by) *him* imports our being absolv'd from that Guilt which he died to make Attonement for, and thereby brought into a state of Favour and Acceptance with him, as if he had never offended.

Some indeed and particularly *Grotius* suppose that the *Abstract* is put for the *Concrete*. *Sin for Sinners*, and *Righteousness for Righteous Persons*, and supposes an *Ellipsis* of the Particle *us*. And he thus paraphrases the Words, he hath dealt with him (i. e. with Christ) as if he had been a Sinner, by exposing him to the punishment of our Offences, that we might be treated by him as if we had been righteous Persons that had never offended. This Paraphrase is in the main to the same Purport as that I have offer'd, though I think not so natural and unconstrain'd. And far more natural than theirs, who assert, that Christ was *made a Criminal in Foro Poli*, and that we are made as righteous as he, by God's transferring his personal Righteousness upon us. (Of the Absurdity of which Exposition, I have spoken more fully, under the 4th Dissertation, to which I refer the Reader.)

In the Epistle which the Apostle Paul wrote to the *Galatians* He chiefly set's himself to oppose those Judaizing Teachers, who would urge the necessity of the Gentile-Christians observing the *Ceremonial Law of Moses*, which the Apostle had declared their *Freedom* from.

I may easily trust every impartial and judicious Reader to discover what is so manifest in the whole Strain of it. The Passages that most immediately relate to the Doctrine of *Justification* are such as these.

Chap. xi. v. 15, 16.

We, who are Jews by Nature, and not Sinners of the Gentiles, Knowing that a Man is not justify'd by the Works of the Law, but by the Faith of Jesus Christ, even as we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justify'd by the Faith of Christ, and not by the Works of the Law, For by the Works of the Law shall no Flesh be justify'd. q. d. We, who are *Jews by Birth*, knowing that we ourselves must despair of Favour and Acceptance with God, if the Law of Works (including the Moral as well as Ceremonial Law) were made the final Rule of Judgment, as well as the Gentiles, since neither can pretend an exact observance of the one or the other, have therefore believed in Jesus Christ, that we might by Faith in his Mediation obtain Pardon and Acceptance with God, Justification by the Works of the Law being impossible alike to all Mankind.

V. 19. *I through the Law am dead to the Law, that I might live to God.* q. d. I through the Law that discovers to me so much Guilt, am dead to the whole Law as a Rule of Judgment, and to the Ceremonial part of it as no longer obligatory (that *Hand-writing of Ordinances* being now cancelled and blotted out. Col. xi. 14.) that I might live to that God, who has graciously promised eternal Life to all that so believe in his Son, as to obey him.

Ver. 21 *I do not frustrate the Grace of God, For if Righteousness come by the Law, Then Christ is dead in vain.* q. d. The plain tendency of the Doctrine of these Judaizing Teachers is to frustrate the Grace of God declared in the Gospel; For if none are accepted of God as Righteous, but such as have perfectly observed that Law, Or if Right to Impunity and Life come only by the Law as the Rule of Judgment, Christ died in vain to obtain the Pardon of our manifold Offences against it, and to procure our Acceptance with God upon the more gracious Terms of the Law of Faith.

Chap. iii.

The Apostle in the beginning of it argues from that eminent Instance of divine Favour to the Christian Church viz. *The Effusion of the Holy Spirit in his extraordinary and miraculous Gifts*, of which many of themselves were Partakers, and Appeals to themselves, Whether these were conferred upon them as Observers of the Law of Moses, or Believers on the Son of God, by the Law, or by the Hearing of Faith, i. e. by the Law of Moses or by the Gospel of Christ.

Ver. 12. *Even as Abraham believed in God, and it was accounted to him for Righteousness.* q. d. Abraham himself the Father of the Faithful, was accepted by God, not on the Account of any sinless Observance of the Law of Moses, which was not given till long after, but on the Account of his Faith in the Promise God made to him of that Seed of his, in whom all Families of the Earth should be blessed.

Ver. 13. *Know ye therefore that they which are of Faith the same are the Children of Abraham.* q. d. All that are Imitators of Abraham's Faith in that promised Seed are his Children, and Heirs of the Promise made to him the Father of the Faithful.

Ver. 14, 15. *And the Scripture foreseeing, That God would justify the Heathen through Faith, preached before the Gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all Nations be blessed. So then they which be of Faith are blessed with faithful Abraham.* q. d. And the Spirit of God by whom the inspired Penmen of the Holy Scriptures were directed, foreseeing that God would in his due Time bring the once idolatrous Gentiles into his Church, and receive them into a State of Favour and Acceptance with him, upon their Sincerely embracing the Faith of Christ, published before-hand this merciful Design of God, these good Tidings of great Joy to all People, saying, *In thy Seed shall all Nations be blessed.*

10. *For as many as are of the Works of the Law are cursed, For it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all Things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them.* q. d. All that vainly expect to be justified by the Tenour

of the Law, rejecting God's Method of justifying Sinners by his free Grace through the Redemption that is in Christ, will find themselves obnoxious to the Curse it has denounced against all that perform not an exact and sinless Obedience to it, which neither Jews nor Gentiles ever did.

Ver. 11, 12. *But that no Man is justify'd by the Law in the sight of God, is evident, For the Just shall live by Faith, and the Law is not of Faith; But the Man that doeth them shall live in them.* q. d. That no Man is justify'd by the Tenour of the Law in the sight of God, appears from what is written, *That the Just shall live* (i. e. obtain Life) by that Faith that embraces the Promise of the Messiah (that Seed of Abraham,) and of Pardon and Acceptance by him. But the Law contains no such gracious Promise. The Sanction of the Law secures Life and Happiness to none, but the perfect Observers of it.

13, 14. *Christ hath redeemed us from the Curse of the Law, being made a Curse for us, For it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a Tree, That the Blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the Promise of the Spirit through Faith.* q. d. Tho' the Law denounces a Curse against all the Transgressors of it, to which Curse we were all obnoxious, yet Christ has redeem'd us from it, by no less a Price than his being made a Curse for us, by dying for our Sins, even that Death of the Cross, (on which he was hung) and which kind of Death the Law it self represents as most Ignominious and Accursed. That our Guilt being fully expiated by his bearing our Sins in his own Body on the Tree, The Blessing of Abraham (including all those spiritual and salutary Benefits imported by it) might come on the believing Gentiles as well as the believing Jews by Jesus Christ, who purchased them at this dear Expence for us; that we might by Faith in him receive the Promise of the Holy Spirit, by whose renewing and sanctifying Operations we are made meet to partake of them.

Ver. 17. *For if the Inheritance be of the Law, It is no more of Promise, But God gave it to Abraham by Promise.*

The Inheritance here is the same Thing with the Blessedness that should come on all Nations through Christ as the Seed of Abraham. And if the Law could entitle them to it by their sinless Observance of it, they might claim it as a Reward of Debt. But it was made over to Abraham and to his spiritual Seed, by a free Promise founded on meer Grace and Favour, and not upon Merit in Abraham or his Children by Faith.

21. *Is the Law then against the Promises of God? God forbid. For if there had been a Law given which could have given Life, Verily Righteousness should have been by the Law.* q. d. If there had been a Law given, that could have given Life, by our ability to yeild a sinless Obedience to it, Our Right to that Life should have been by that Law as God's only Rule of Judgment; And there would have needed no Law of Faith, the Promises whereof are founded on meer Grace and Mercy, and made through the interposing Attonement of a Mediator.

22, 23, 24. v. *But the Scripture hath concluded all under Sin, that the Promise by Faith of Jesus might be given to them that believe. But before Faith*
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came,

came, we were kept under the Law, shut up unto the Faith that should afterwards be revealed. Wherefore the Law was our School-master to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justify'd by Faith. q. d. The Scripture hath concluded all Mankind to be under the Guilt of Sin, and liable to Condemnation for it, that the Promise of that Blessedness which consists in the free and full Remission of it, which Faith in Jesus Christ is the appointed Condition of, might be given to all that believe, whether Jews or Gentiles. But before Faith came, i. e. before the Method of God's justifying guilty Sinners freely by his Grace through the Redemption that is in Christ, upon the Terms of their believing in him, was fully discovered, We were held in Custody under the Yoke of the Law of Moses, shut up (tho' as Prisoners of Hope) unto the Doctrine of Faith that should afterwards be more fully reveal'd, and should more clearly discover to us the way of escaping it's threaten'd Curse. Wherefore the Law was a School-master to bring us to Christ, that we might be justify'd by Faith, Partly as it's peremptory Curse shew'd us the utter Impossibility of being justify'd as perfect Observers of it, and Partly as the Sacrifices, it injoin'd the constant Repetition of, were continual Remembrances of Sin, but incapable to expiate the real Guilt of it, and therefore led us to the Expectation of the promised Messiah, who was to appear to make Reconciliation for Iniquity, and take away Sin (as to it's condemning Guilt) by the Sacrifice of himself; all those Sacrifices under the Law being but Types and Presignifications of his. And this in order to our being freed from Condemnation, and entitled to Life through Faith in his complete Attonement. And I take this Privilege to be meant, by that everlasting Righteousness the Messiah was to bring in. Dan. ix. 24.

Chap. v. 3, 4, 5.

For I testify again to every Man that is circumcised, that he is a Debtor to do the whole Law. Christ is become of no effect to you, Whosoever of you are justified by the Law, ye are fallen from Grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the Hope of Righteousness by Faith. q. d. He that submits to Circumcision from an Opinion of the Necessity of it, does by taking upon him that Badge of Judaism, bind himself to the Observance of the whole Law of Moses. But if we seek to be justify'd by that Law, We do in effect disclaim the Mediation of Christ, and render it useless and needless, and are fallen from the Grace of the Gospel manifested in our Pardon and Acceptance through the Redemption that is in him as the only procuring Cause of it. But we believe Jews as well as Gentiles are instructed by the Holy Spirit to look for that Right to eternal Life which is the great Object of our Hope by the Tenour of the Law of Faith, not that of the Law of Works.

In the Epistle to the Philippians, We have this Passage relating to the Subject under our Consideration.

Chap. iii. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

Tho' I might also have Confidence in the Flesh. If any other Man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the Flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth Day, of the Stock of Israel, of the Tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, As touching the Law a Pharisee. Concerning Zeal persecuting the Church, Touching the Righteousness which is in the Law blameless. But what Things were gain to me those I counted Loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and

I count all Things but Loss for the excellency of the Knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the Loss of all Things, and count them but Dung that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having my own Righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the Faith of Christ, the Righteousness which is of God by Faith. The Paraphrase on this Passage of the Apostle, being already almost verbatim in the foregoing Dissertations; The Reader may be refer'd to Dissertation IVth for it.

The Apostle in the 2d and 3d v. cautions his Converts against those unbelieving Jews who opposed Christianity, and placed their Confidence in the external Observances of the Mosaic Law. As to these he tells his Philippian Converts that he could carry his Pretensions higher than they. He was circumcised the eighth Day, He was of the Stock of Israel, and Tribe of Benjamin (that beloved Son of his Father Jacob) An Hebrew of the Hebrews, (both his Parents, and probably all his Ancestors being such by Birth) Touching the Law a Pharisee, (one of the strictest Sects, that made the highest Pretensions to a rigid Observance of all the Ceremonial Precepts of the Law, and even of the Traditionary Commandments of their Elders.) And such was his blind Zeal for the ritual Observances of the Law, that it prompted him to persecute the Church, as supposing the Disciples of Christ reviled the Law, and that Christ himself was to destroy the Temple, and change the Customs that Moses delivered to them, Acts vi. 13, 14. And he adds, Touching the Righteousness which is in the Law blameless. He cannot here mean that as to inward real Righteousness which the Moral Law prescribes, he was blameless in the sight of God, (For that were to assert a downright Falshood;) he can only intend, That in the Judicial Proceedings exercis'd in the Jewish Courts of Judicature, none could charge him with any such Breach of their Law, as they were wont to take notice of, and punish. He was, in that respect, and in the common estimation of his Country-men, a blameless Observer of the Law.

Having recounted all these external Privileges, which he might value himself upon, and confide in more than most others, He tells them, that he accounted them all but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Jesus, his Lord, and for the far greater Gain in securing an Interest in him. In whom he desir'd to be found, not having his own Righteousness, which is of the Law, (i. e. either that external Conformity to the Law, which he confided in, while he was a self justifying Pharisee, or that Right to Life which he thought this external Righteousness might enable him to claim). But he now desired to be found in Christ, having that Right to Impunity and Life, which the Law of Faith entitled him to, even that which God does by his gracious Covenant, grant to all that believe in his Son. And to qualify him for that blessed Privilege; he desir'd to know Christ, and the Power of his Resurrection, and the fellowship of his Sufferings being made conformable to his Death, i. e. by dying to sin, and walking in newness of Life, or Living to God and real Righteousness. See ver. 10. For such a spiritual Conformity to his dying and risen Saviour, was absolutely necessary to render him a morally capable Object of Divine Forgiveness and Acceptance.

In the Epistle to Titus, Chap. iii. We have this Passage, verse 5, 6, 7. Not by Works of Righteousness which we have done, but according to his Mercy

be saved us, by the Washing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Saviour: That being justify'd by his Grace, we should be made Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life.

The Apostle had, in the fore-going Verses, represented those he writes to as sometimes foolish and disobedient, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures. Living in Malice and Envy, hateful, and hating one another. And in these he represents the happy Change which the Mercy of God had made both in their Nature and State. In their Nature, by that Renovation of it, or Regeneration, of which the Holy Spirit was the Author and external Baptism the Sign and Emblem: In their State, by their being freely absolv'd from their past Guilt, and made Heirs according to the Hope of Eternal Life. And this Change both in their Nature and State, he tells them, was not to be ascrib'd to any Works of Righteousness they had formerly done, (for they had not done them) but to the Mercy and Grace of God through Jesus Christ their Saviour.

I shall now proceed to consider, What the Apostle James has relating to this Subject, which has occasion'd so many Debates about the reconciling his Doctrine with that of the Apostle Paul.

In his Chapter xi. we have these Words, Verse 20, 21, 22, &c.

Wilt thou know, O vain Man, that Faith without Works is dead. Was not Abraham our Father justify'd by Works, when he had offer'd Isaac his Son upon the Altar? Seest thou, how Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works Faith was made perfect? And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for Righteousness; and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by Works a man is justify'd, and not by Faith only. Likewise, was not Rahab the Harlot justify'd by Works, when she had received the Messengers, and sent them out another way. For as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead also.

All do agree, That the Apostle Paul chiefly sets himself to oppose the unbelieving Jews, who thought the entire Observance of the Law necessary to their acceptance with God, and rejected that Method of his justifying guilty Sinners, through the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ, which the Gospel reveals. And on the other hand, that St. James opposes those that expected Acceptance with God, by an ineffectual Faith that was not productive of good Works, which are the genuine Fruits of a sincere and living Faith.

In order to the reconciling the Doctrine of these two Apostles, I would premise these two Things.

1. That as God's justifying us, is his admitting us into a state of Favour and Acceptance with him, so it must be considered as a continu'd Act, according to the declared Tenour of his gracious Covenant. See Dissertation the vith.

2. That we must distinguish between such Works as fully answer the Demands of the divine Law, and would, if we had them, render the Reward of Debt, and not of Grace. And those Works (or Acts of Piety, Righteousness, Charity, &c.) which are the genuine Fruits of a living Faith, and are entirely consistent with the need of pardoning Mercy, and

and are no otherwise accepted, than through the Merits of Christ, as our only Mediator with him, and the Rewarding whereof, is an Act of unmerited Grace and Favour.

If these two Suppositions be allowed, (as I have in the fore-going Dissertations shewn they ought to be) The Difficulty of reconciling these two inspired Writers vanishes, as will appear by this short Paraphrase on the Words of the Apostle James.

Wilt thou know, O vain Man, That Faith without Works is dead. i. e. That a bare speculative Assent to the Truth of the Gospel without those good Works, which its Doctrines should produce, is dead, i. e. can no way avail to thy present acceptance with God, or thy final Salvation.

Was not Abraham, our Father, justify'd by Works, when he had offer'd his Son Isaac upon the Altar? q. d. Was not Abraham our Father continued in a state of Favour and Acceptance with God, by those Instances of sincere Obedience, which his Faith in the divine Promises produced, particularly that eminent one of offering up his Son Isaac, on the Occasion whereof God himself expresses his gracious Approbation of Abraham. By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, For because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy Son, thy only Son, That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying, I will multiply thy Seed as the Stars of the Heavens, &c. And in thy Seed shall all the Nations of the Earth be blessed, because thou hast obeyed my Voice. Gen. xxii. 16, 17, and 18th verse.

Seest thou how Faith wrought with his Works, and by Works Faith was made perfect? q. d. Seest thou how his Faith concurr'd and co-operated with his Works, to render him acceptable to God, since it was his firm Belief, that God was able to perform his Promise, by raising Isaac from the Dead, that made him so readily comply with God's Command of offering him, and by this, as well as other Instances of Obedience, his Faith was perfected, by obtaining its designed End, the securing his Interest in that ancient Promise, which God, on this Occasion, solemnly renewed, See the above Gen. xxii. 16, 17, &c.

And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for Righteousness, and he was called the Friend of God. q. d. It then appeared, That Abraham, upon his Faith in the divine Promise (according to what the Scripture declares) was in a State of Favour and Acceptance with God, and regarded by him as one of his upright Servants, and even dignify'd with the Honourable Title of the Friend and Favourite of God. The Sincerity of that Faith, being manifested by that eminent Instance and Proof of his sincere Obedience, and the Promise of God then renewed to him.

Ye see then that by Works a Man is justify'd, and not by Faith only. q. d. Ye see then, that as a living Faith brings a Man into a State of Favour and Acceptance with God, so he is continued in it by those Instances of sincere Obedience which his Faith produces. For though these Works fall short of what the Law of Works demands to entitle us to the Reward; yet they are such as a merciful God will, for the sake of Christ, (that promised Seed of Abraham) accept and crown with a Reward of Grace, according to the Tenour of the Law of Faith.

I take this Paraphrase to be much more agreeable to the Words of the Apostle, than theirs, that in order to reconcile his Doctrine with that of the Apostle Paul, would here distinguish between *Justification before God*, and *Justification in the sight of Men*, and suppose the Apostle James to speak only of the latter. Whereas the Apostle James when he saith, *Abraham was justify'd by Works, when he offer'd his Son Isaac*, supposes that Scripture fulfill'd thereby, That *Abraham believed God*, and it was imputed to him for *Righteousness*, which manifestly refers to his *Justification in the sight of God*, who graciously accepted his Faith in the promised Seed, as an Instance of his Integrity towards him, and as the appointed Condition of his Right to that Blessedness, that should, through his Seed, come on all Nations; and also accepted of his Obedience to this particular Command of offering his Son, as a farther Proof and Manifestation of his Integrity, and an occasion of his honouring him with the Title of his Friend.

And if both the Apostles speak of *Justification before God*, there appears to me, an absolute necessity, in order to the reconciling their seemingly contrary Assertions, to distinguish of Works, between those that fully answer the Demands of the

divine Law, and which if we had them, we should have no need of the Merits of such a Mediator with God as our Lord Jesus, nor any need of Pardon through his atoning Blood, but might claim his Acceptance unto Life, as a Reward of Debt, and not of Grace. And 'tis such Works that the Apostle Paul asserts, that no Man is justified by, because all have sinned, &c. And such Works (or Instances of sincere tho' imperfect Obedience) as themselves, make us need divine Mercy, to pardon their Defects, and Grace for Christ's sake, to accept and reward them; and which are the genuine Fruits of a true living Faith, and as necessary to our continuance in a state of Favour and Acceptance with God, as Faith is to our first entrance into it. And 'tis to such Works the Apostle James describes our continued Justification before God, dealing with us not according to the Tenour of the Law of Works, but the gracious Tenour of the Law of Faith. Now there is no manner of contrariety between these two different Assertions as thus explain'd. The Apostle Paul opposes all Pretension to Works that are truly meritorious of our Acceptance with God to eternal Life. The Apostle James opposes all Pretensions to the gracious Acceptance of God, on the Account of a barren Faith that is not productive of the Fruits of sincere Obedience. And between these two there is no Contradiction, but a real Accord.

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